

Historical Materialism 55

Plebeian Power

*Collective Action and Indigenous, Working-Class
and Popular Identities in Bolivia*

Álvaro García Linera

Plebeian Power

Historical Materialism Book Series

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Plebeian Power

Collective Action and Indigenous, Working-Class
and Popular Identities in Bolivia

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2014



The English translation has been made possible with the kind support of Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO).

Additional funds for the English translation were provided by the Latin American Studies Association in the form of a FORD-LASA Special Projects Grant.

First published in 2007 as *La potencia plebeya: Acción colectiva e identidades indígenas, obreras y populares en Bolivia* by CLACSO, Bogota and Siglo del Hombre.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Linares, Alvaro Garcia.

[Potencia plebeya. English]

Plebeian power: collective action and indigenous, working-class and popular identities in Bolivia / by Alvaro Garcia Linares.

pages cm. — (Historical materialism book series, ISSN 1570-1522 ; volume 55)

"First published in 2007 as *La potencia plebeya: Accion colectiva e identidades indigenas, obreras y populares en Bolivia* by CLACSO, Bogota."

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-25443-5 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-90-04-25444-2 (e-book : alk. paper) 1. Labor unions—Bolivia. 2. Syndicalism—Bolivia. 3. Labor movement—Bolivia. 4. Indians of South America—Bolivia—Government relations. 5. Indians of South America—Bolivia—Politics and government. I. Title.

HD6607.G3713 2013

331.880984—dc23

2013031796

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual "Brill" typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see www.brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1570-1522

ISBN 978-90-04-25443-5 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-25444-2 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Contents

Álvaro García Linera: Reflections on Two Centuries of Bolivia	1
<i>Pablo Stefanoni</i>	
I. The <i>Communist Manifesto</i> and our Present	
The <i>Communist Manifesto</i> and Our Present: Four Theses on Its Historical Actualty	17
II. Citizenship and Democracy	
Citizenship and Democracy in Bolivia (1900–98)	89
III. Labour-Movement	
Historical Cycles in the Formation of the Condition of the Mining Working-Class in Bolivia (1825–1999)	107
The Death of the Twentieth-Century Working-Class Condition	117
IV. The Indigenous Movement	
The Colonial Narrative and Communal Narrative	145
Indigenous Autonomies and the Multinational State	159
V. Social-Movement Structures	
Union, Multitude and Community: Social Movements and Forms of Political Autonomy in Bolivia	211

VI. The Crisis of the State and the Revolutionary Period

The Crisis of the State and Indigenous-Plebeian Uprisings in Bolivia	265
The Struggle for Power in Bolivia	283
Indianism and Marxism: The Disparity between Two Revolutionary Rationales	305
Bibliography of Álvaro García Linera	323
References	325
Index	341

Álvaro García Linera: Reflections on Two Centuries of Bolivia

Pablo Stefanoni¹

I see myself as one of the last Jacobins of the French Revolution, and I see Evo as Robespierre.

Álvaro García Linera

In addition to his role as Evo Morales's vice-president and 'co-pilot', Álvaro García Linera is one of Bolivia's foremost intellectuals. As such, he is clearly an authoritative interpreter of the complex political and social process that began on 22 January 2006, when Evo Morales Ayma took office as president of Bolivia. Evo Morales was the first indigenous person to take the reins of this Andean-Amazonian nation, where 62 percent of inhabitants self-identify as indigenous peoples, mainly Quechuas and Aymaras.² Indeed, in 2005 Morales called upon García Linera to be his running-mate (after a first attempt to find a 'representative of the national bourgeoisie'), because he considered him to be a 'bridge' – a 'translator', as García Linera likes

1. A journalist and economist, formerly a recipient of grants from the Latin American Council for Social Sciences (CLACSO) and the Swedish Agency for International Cooperation (SIDA), in 2002. Co-author, with Hervé do Alto, of the book *La revolución de Evo Morales. De la coca al palacio* (Stefanoni and Do Alto 2006). Currently, he is the Bolivia correspondent for the Argentinian newspaper *Clarín* and the director of the Bolivian edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

2. The Bolivian census, unlike others such as Ecuador's, does not include questions about *racial* self-identification, but rather *ethno-cultural* self-identification. While the former includes categories such as 'white', 'indigenous', 'mestizo', and 'black', the latter refers to identifying with specific indigenous peoples: Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní, and so on. Thus there is no contradiction when sixty percent of Bolivians self-identify as *mestizo* (in many surveys) and a similar percentage identify themselves in the census as belonging to a native nation.

to present himself – between the peasants and indigenous peoples and the urban middle-classes.³ These latter were reluctant to vote for a union-schooled peasant whose only educational credentials were a secondary-school certificate from the country's interior, but were more open to accepting the *cocalero* leader if he was accompanied by 'a man who knows', as promised on one of their 2005 electoral-campaign posters.

More than two years after coming to the vice-presidency, nobody can seriously claim that García Linera is the 'brain' of the government, but this does not deny the fact that this self-taught mathematician and sociologist, an enthusiastic follower of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (whom he frequently cites in media and academic interviews), holds a position in the new Bolivian administration that sets him apart from the insignificance that has traditionally characterised the vice-presidency. In fact, he scarcely uses his official office, instead carrying out his work in a more modest office just a few steps away from that of the head of state, in the governmental palace – Palacio Quemado – in La Paz. The Bolivian president has almost no important meetings without García Linera also in attendance, normally dressed in a three-piece suit (almost always without a tie) and a black overcoat.

The current vice-president was born to a middle-class *mestizo* family in Cochabamba on 19 October 1962. He became interested in politics during the 1971–8 Hugo Banzer dictatorship, and immediately after the fall of this régime – when he was 17 years old – he witnessed the great Aymara roadblock in La Paz, organised by the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* ('United Confederation of Peasant-Workers' Unions of Bolivia', CSUTCB), already strongly influenced by the Indianist ideas advanced by the Katarist movement.⁴ Shortly afterwards, his interest in the link between politics

3. When applied to Bolivia, the concept of middle-class can, at times, obfuscate more than clarify. The existence of 'ethnic capital' means (even the low-income) white-*mestizos* are considered middle class, and excludes the '*cholo*' (urban-indigenous) sectors that have accumulated significant economic capital, primarily through informal commerce.

4. The Katarist movement emerged in the 1970s, promoted by urban-Aymara sectors with access to post-secondary education. Inspired by the ideas of Fausto Reinaga, it is considered the first contemporary Indianist movement in Bolivia. The Katarists introduced an interpretation of Bolivian history as a passage from Spanish colonial domination to domestic colonialism, maintained by the republican élites, and they contributed to the construction of an Aymara-Quechua 'Indian' identity. Despite their important influence on peasant-unions, they never succeeded in establishing themselves as a political movement. After splitting up over the issue of political participation in the 'liberal' state in the 1990s, one of their leaders, Víctor Hugo Cárdenas, became the vice-president of Bolivia as part of an alliance with the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* ('Revolutionary Nationalist Movement', MNR) in their neoliberal phase, under the leadership of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. From this position, he advanced the constitutional recognition of Bolivia as a 'pluriethnic and multicultural' country. The current process of change,

and ethnicity persisted in Mexico, where he moved in order to get a degree in mathematics at the Universidad Autónoma, 'because I thought that I could learn the 'soft' sciences by myself'.⁵ There, in the context of the campaigns in solidarity with Central America's armed movements, he was attracted to the debates over the Mayan ethnic question promoted by the Guatemalan guerrillas, and – as he recalls – he began to move away from his more philosophical and abstract studies linked to *Capital*, Hegel's dialectics and Kant's philosophy, turning to a more practical approach, which, by the 1980s, would entail a shift to 'more Leninist' readings.

Unlike most in Bolivian intellectual circles, García Linera was never an activist of the traditional Left – historically represented by the *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* ('Revolutionary Workers' Party') and the Bolivian Communist Party – and nor was he involved in the groups based on a Christian-Guevarist ideology, such as the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* ('Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR'), which he regarded with some contempt. Indeed, his interpretations of Marx, Lenin, Althusser and Gramsci were useful in his challenge to the 'old Left' and for his search for a Marxism suited to the Andean reality, previously attempted by the Peruvian communist José Carlos Mariátegui. His return to Bolivia in 1985 coincided with the resounding failure of the reformist *Unidad Democrática Popular* government ('Popular Democratic Unity', UDP), originally made up of the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario de Izquierda* ('Revolutionary Nationalist Movement of the Left'), the Communist Party and the MIR, overwhelmed with hyperinflation and the conflicting pressures of the then powerful *Central Obrera Boliviana* ('Bolivian Workers' Central', COB) and conservative business-sectors.

With the UDP's early withdrawal from power, the Left disappeared from the electoral scene, except for the MIR, which survived at the cost of converting to neoliberalism. At the same time, García Linera's politico-intellectual path became increasingly more focused on combining 'two revolutionary rationalities' in dispute at that time: Marxism and Indianism.⁶

led by Evo Morales, acknowledges Katarism as one of its political-ideological roots. For a study along these lines, see Rivera 1987.

5. Stefanoni, Ramírez and Svampa 2009.

6. The military-peasant pact, signed between the peasant-movement and the military president René Barrientos in the 1960s, served to isolate the miners (massacred by the dictatorship) and generated a long period of working-class distrust toward the peasants, exacerbated by the peasants' supposed 'betrayal' of the Argentinian-Cuban guerrilla fighter, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara. These prejudices were partially overcome with the growth of Katarism and the new worker-peasant alliance that began in the late 1970s. Since 2003, it has been the peasants who consider themselves the 'vanguard' of the process of change led by Evo Morales.

That is when my obsession with finding everything Marx had said about the [ethnic] issue began, and I did this for ten years. We started searching through Marx's notebooks and texts on the 'non-historic peoples' from 1848 and through the works of Engels, but we also started to go back to our readings of the *Grundrisse*, and the texts about India, about China, then the letters to Vera Zasulich,⁷ and then the ethnological manuscripts, and also the other, unpublished manuscripts in Amsterdam. We travelled there to look for a set of notebooks on Latin America; Marx had eight or ten notebooks on Latin America. We became obsessed with finding a common thread on indigenous issues from a Marxist perspective, thinking that it was possible for Marxism to explain the significance of this issue, of the content and the potential of indigenous peoples' ethno-national demands. This led to several fights, in less academic and more polemical texts, with the Bolivian Left, for whom there were no Indians – just workers, peasants and the middle-class. It was a peripheral debate, because we were a group of people with no influence, we were just handing out our pamphlets, our little texts, our fifty-page mimeographed booklets, at the marches, in the mines. But that is when the debate started'.⁸

Included in the polemics is a brief text called *América*, in which García Linera debates with José María Aricó about Marx's approach to Latin America, mainly discussed in his much-debated text on Simón Bolívar, published in *The New American Cyclopedia*.⁹

All this occurred in the context of neoliberal counter-reforms that led to the defeat of the miners' March for Life; with the military siege organised by Víctor Paz Estenssoro and the international collapse of the price of tin, the miners retreated and eventually disbanded. The Bolivian labour-movement and the COB were not able to recover from this until recently, with Bolivia enjoying a new 'popular awakening', led by peasants and indigenous people, starting with the 'Gas-War' in September and October 2003. But the crisis of labour was an expression of a larger phenomenon: the end of the state-capitalism that had begun with the 1952 National Revolution, which was paradoxically laid to rest in 1985–6 by the very leader of that worker, peasant and police uprising that had nationalised the mines, imposed land-reform and established universal suffrage. Doctor Paz, as he was popularly known, became a believer in and driving force behind the 'structural reforms' promoted by the Washington Consensus.

In this context of setbacks for labour, along with the presentation of his theoretical work in books such as *Las condiciones de la revolución social en*

7. Coming from populism (*Narodniki*), later converting to Marxism and joining the Emancipation of Labour group founded by Georgi Plekhanov.

8. Stefanoni, Ramírez and Svampa 2009.

9. Marx 1987a.

Bolivia (based on his interpretation of Lenin) and *De demonios escondidos y momentos de revolución. Marx y la revolución en las extremidades del cuerpo capitalista*,¹⁰ García Linera moved closer to the ex-Katarist peasants led by Felipe Quispe Huanca and to grassroots miners' groups. They were all fighting for a repoliticisation – and 'reinvention' – of the popular sphere by activating an ethnic identity that had often been hidden behind working-class and peasant identities, strengthened both by the Marxist Left and by revolutionary nationalism, which conceived of *Bolivian-ness* as a synonym of being *mestizo*. This group of intellectuals (including his brother, Raúl García Linera, and his wife, the Mexican intellectual Raquel Gutiérrez), peasants and (former) workers created the *Ofensiva Roja de los Ayllus Tupakataristas* ('Red Offensive of Katarist Ayllus') and their armed wing, the *Ejército Guerrillero Tupac Katari* ('Tupac Katari Guerrilla Army', EGTK), whose 'explanatory framework' of Bolivian reality – unlike classic Guevarist *foquismo* – emphasised organising a great indigenous uprising, via military organisation and arming the communities.¹¹

Despite its early military failure, the activity of the EGTK was based – as the name of the organisation implies – on imagined ties to the historical memory of the Aymara leader Tupac Katari's seventeenth-century rebellion, drowned in blood by Spanish colonial troops,¹² and indeed this 'Aymara guerrilla-force' had some success in the training of indigenous cadres. Some peasants from the north of Lake Titicaca even established links with the Peruvian guerrilla-group *Sendero Luminoso* ('Shining Path') and its cadre-schools. However, they returned disappointed, dismayed by how the Indian was made invisible by the Maoist ideology of this messianic group, filtered through the – sometimes delirious – theses of 'President Gonzalo' (as Shining Path activists called their leader, Abimael Guzmán).

Programmatically, the Red Offensive defended the right of the Aymara and Quechua 'nations' to self-determination, and even their separation from the 'bourgeois Bolivian state'.¹³ Despite their efforts to combine Marxism and Indianism, as is evident in the armed group's own pamphlets, the emphasis on Indianist positions, with the *q'aras*¹⁴ as enemies, or on Marxist ones, focusing analysis on the class-dimension, depended on who wrote each declaration. While some of the group's statements spoke of the Left parties as bearers of foreign ideologies 'transplanted from Europe', *Quanachiri* (García Linera's pseudonym)¹⁵

10. García Linera 1991.

11. See Salmón 1992.

12. See Thomson 2002.

13. Salmón 1992.

14. Term literally meaning 'naked', which indigenous people use to refer to the white *mestizos*.

15. 'He who clarifies things', in Aymara.

dedicated hundreds of pages to digging around in Marx, Engels and Lenin, seeking answers to the national or communal/peasant question. In any case, the idea of the 'Indian government' appears in both. Unlike the classic Left, the 'egetecos' – as the EGTKers were commonly known – conferred a revolutionary, and even communist, role upon the peasants, and they imagined a socialism based on the *ayllu* (an Aymara community-structure).¹⁶ It is noteworthy that García Linera has always maintained this notion – namely, the struggle for an indigenous person to become president – even after he abandoned his socialist stance (at least in the orthodox sense of a change from capitalism to a nationalised and state-planned economy).

After several dynamite-attacks against high-voltage electrical towers and oil- and gas-pipelines, all the EGTK leaders were arrested. García Linera was apprehended on 10 April 1992, at the entrance to Senkata in the city of El Alto, next to La Paz. He later reported having been tortured by the police. However, once the worst of the interrogations were over, he began an intellectually productive period, with readings on Andean anthropology, ethnic history and agrarian economy. Building on Marx's *Capital* and the texts of the colonial chroniclers, he began a theoretical undertaking that gave shape to the book *Forma valor y forma comunidad*, which looks at the issue of use-value, exchange-value and the organisational logics of modernity, in order to contrast them with the organisational logics of the Andean world. From this reflection, he derives the logic of the 'value-form as the logic of capitalist modernity', and the 'community-form not as social movement, but as the organisational logic of the Andean world'. More than a decade later, the author recalled:

Since I had a lot of free time, I was able to engage in a kind of anthropological and mathematical reflection and to study certain social spaces. It was five years of prison. I think that it is my best book, because of the time I was able to dedicate to it; because of the patience we had putting together the transcriptions, the wording.¹⁷

16. Felipe Quispe says: 'Our historic oppressors will have to obey our natural laws [but] our natural and community-laws will not be to enslave and discriminate against the white *q'aras* from other continents, the Europeanised *mestizos*, and so on. Instead, we will enact "community-law", equal rights for all those who live and work with integrity in our *Qullasuyu* land (Bolivia). We Aymaras are not infected with a raw "Indian racism", we do not propose a racial struggle of any kind. Understand this well: nobody, here, is building a racial movement, our proposals are not at all irrational, and they have nothing of the European "strains of fascist thought" that some intruding, second-rate intellectuals claim in order to try to discredit, tarnish and distort the real "Communitarian Tupakatarism" that calls for the struggle of the First Nations alongside the banner of class-struggle'. Cited in Stefanoni, Ramírez and Svampa 2009.

17. Ramírez Gallegos and Stefanoni 2006.

Immediately following his release from prison, he entered the academic world in the Faculty of Sociology at the Universidad Mayor San Andrés. His debates about the world of labour – both with the workerist Left and with those who had brought the thesis of the end of the working class to Bolivia – resulted in two academic research-projects, which were presented in two books. These were *Reproletarización*, concerning the manufacturing-industrial world and its organisational and technological changes, and *La condición obrera*, on these same changes in the ‘new mining’. This work analyses the new proletariat of the micro-enterprises, of fragmented and decentralised companies, composed of very young women and men, without rights. They are ignored by all the major union-organisations, which are tied to the idea that miners remain the vanguard of the Bolivian people. In García Linera’s own words:

The general conclusions are that the workers have not disappeared, and they have even grown in numbers, but there has not been any change in the material structure of the working-class condition, of working-class identity or of the political and cultural composition of the [Bolivian] working class; from here, we can derive an explanation for why the COB is dying out as the country’s unifying social movement.¹⁸

In any case, the 1990s were not a good time for critical scholarship, as the majority of intellectuals of the Left were co-opted by Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s ‘multiculturalist neoliberalism’,¹⁹ and interest in these books was low.

In fact, García Linera’s leap into the public arena, along with that of other intellectuals affiliated with the *Comuna* group,²⁰ went hand in hand with the ‘Water-War’ of 2000, when the inhabitants of Cochabamba rose up against the rate-increase imposed by Aguas del Tunari (Bechtel), with a violent uprising that ended with the expulsion of the multinational from Bolivia. But, even more importantly, the unexpected ‘Water-War’ marked a turning point, ending a decade and a half of popular defeats and the belief – furthered by neoliberal intellectuals – in the end of street-politics and in the triumph of (liberal) representative democracy as the only space for political action. Little by little, a new national-popular common sense, and the re-evaluation of direct action as a form of struggle, restored some of the lost legitimacy of street-politics. Shortly

18. Stefanoni, Ramírez and Svampa 2009.

19. Under the government of Sánchez de Lozada and vice-president Víctor Hugo Cárdenas – the first Aymara to hold this position – the multicultural and pluricultural character of Bolivia was constitutionally recognised.

20. A politico-intellectual group including Raquel Gutiérrez, Álvaro García Linera, Luis Tapia, Raúl Prada and Oscar Vega. Their books incorporated theoretical elements from the ‘new Lefts’, from the sociology of social movements, and from critical philosophy, to provide an account of the new indigenous-popular struggles following the collapse of the Bolivian Workers’ Central as the hegemonic centre of the Bolivian subaltern world.

afterward, the Aymaras of the La Paz *altiplano*, led by Felipe Quispe, organised a massive blockade of La Paz, even barring the entrance of food-products.²¹ In a context of new forms of struggle – but, above all, with new and little-understood (mostly peasant and indigenous) social actors in the cities – García Linera's role as a *sociologist/interpreter* was strengthened. This was evident in his increasing presence in the media, with the fashionable title 'analyst'; indeed, his growing intellectual prestige allowed the public memory of his past guerrilla-activism to fade.

Though he spoke from a position of commitment to the social movements – a term that started to replace the classist terminology of the past – his political approaches and positions were moderated with sophisticated analyses, able to 'translate' for the urban middle-classes the 'rationality' (Indianists would say 'world-view') of the Bolivia that was traditionally heavily scorned, a Bolivia which was completely obscure to the hegemonic intellectuals. At that time, in addition to Italian Antonio Negri (whose texts he used as he studied the 'political composition of class' in his works on the world of labour), García Linera took a 'sociological turn' towards social-movement theories and incorporated the historical sociology of Charles Tilly and the most rationalist visions of resource-mobilisation, distancing himself from theorists like Alain Touraine.

It was at this time that his article on the 'union-form', the 'communitarian form' and – a novel element – the 'multitude-form' first appeared. This was one of his most innovative texts, allowing for an understanding of the transformations in the shape of political and social aggregation that had resulted from the neoliberal reforms implemented from the mid-1980s onwards. This article is marked by his autonomist 'momentum', somewhat influenced by Negri's 'multitude', in addition to his more abiding point of reference, France's Pierre Bourdieu, and the Bolivian René Zavaleta.²² Nonetheless, García Linera explains that he uses the concept of 'multitude' in a different way than Negri, who brought it into fashion, and that he refers to an 'association of associations of various social classes and identities without a unique hegemony within it'. There, according to the Bolivian vice-president,

peasants, irrigation-farmers, students, unionised workers, the unemployed, intellectuals and unaffiliated individuals can join together, and hegemony moves around issues, around circumstances, mobilisations over particular issues, the autonomy of each organisation according to its repertoire, structures

21. La Paz is located in a kind of natural bowl, facilitating blockades and sieges.

22. Nationalist sociologist who later moved toward Marxism. He developed a profound political-sociological analysis of Bolivia as a '*sociedad abigarrada*' (a 'motley society').

and ways of working; there is, however, a shared will to act on an issue and with mobile and temporary leaderships.²³

The *Movimiento al Socialismo* ('Movement for Socialism', MAS) was the result of this aggregation of diverse peasant-unions, heirs of a trade-union culture from a plebeian world, whose political action was historically rooted in the union. In this context, in 1995, was adopted the 'thesis of the political instrument', favouring the constitution of a 'party' that would allow these popular organisations to take the leap into the electoral arena without having to make alliances with the legal parties of the day (including the small groups of the Left with whom the peasants, especially the *cocaleros* – the core of the MAS – had previously been obliged to ally themselves, as they were not registered electoral entities).²⁴

The cycle of mobilisations that began in 2000 had a surprisingly significant electoral expression in 2002: the *cocalero* leader Evo Morales, who had engaged in violent confrontations with the state to defend the right to grow coca, came second in the presidential poll that year, less than two points behind Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who received just over 22 percent of the votes. But only a little more than a year later, the President – who spoke Spanish with an American accent – was overthrown in a massive popular uprising, known as the 'Gas-War', which began with attacks on the government's plans to export natural gas to Mexico and the United States through Chilean ports (the country that had seized Bolivia's access to the Pacific Ocean in the War of the Pacific in 1879), but ended up constructing a new anti-neoliberal and anti-colonial common sense.

García Linera began dividing his time between the university, the media – where he started to work regularly, including as an analyst on a popular news-programme – and advising the peasant-unions. His profile as an intellectual with ties to social movements (even the most radical Aymaras respect him for having been imprisoned as an Indianist) appealed to Evo Morales, whom he started to advise in a more or less formal capacity. Later, in 2005, in the midst of a new 'Gas-War' – this time pushing for the nationalisation of hydrocarbons, which led to the fall of the Carlos Mesa government and then to early elections – his daily battle 'for common sense', as García Linera now likes to define this activity, situated him as the ideal complement to the *cocalero* leader in his goal of attracting the urban middle-classes, who were fearful for their country's future if placed in the hands of an indigenous leader trained in agrarian unionism.²⁵

Indeed, the nationalist climate that was present in the country, along with the strong discrediting of the Right – represented in the elections by former

23. Stefanoni, Ramirez and Svampa 2009.

24. See Stefanoni and Do Alto 2006.

25. The concept of a 'poncho-and-tie government' expressed the need to adopt this symbol of urban-modern society, and, indeed, the acculturation of the indigenous people.

president Jorge 'Tuto' Quiroga – paved the way for the electoral triumph of the Morales-García Linera ticket on 18 December 2005, with an unprecedented 53.7 percent of the votes (the highest percentage of votes for any presidential ticket since the return to democracy in 1982), and inaugurated his phase as a 'sociologist/vice-president'. Thus continued a Bolivian – and Latin American – tradition of intellectuals that passed, with varying levels of success, from the 'weapons of critique' to the 'critique of weapons' in order to transform reality, in the Bolivian case shaped by the incapacity of the élites to build an inclusive nation and a shared strategy for the country. At the same time, his candidacy for the vice-presidency implied a definitive rupture with Felipe Quispe, who had always been in opposition to Morales on account of a struggle over the leadership of the peasant-unions, and who lost his competition with the *cocalero* leader to become 'Bolivia's first indigenous president'.

Shortly after he had taken over an office in the Palacio Quemado, García Linera stated:

Sociological reflexivity is crucial, because without it, you get lost in the forest. It is very easy to get lost and to start acting intuitively, surrounded by countless little trees. I think that a good part of public administration works this way, hence the effort to see the forest in its entirety: but this is not an easy task. While over a relatively long period, a scholar can observe how language and knowledge take on collective meaning (the mediated conversion of the word to ideology), in government, we see the word become political matter, we see it become practical institutional fact (the conversion of the word to matter through the bureaucratic process). But it is a fine task indeed to achieve this combination: a level of specificity that is inaccessible to the external researcher and a level of generality and a global perspective that is essential for orienting yourself in more systemic terms. My efforts are directed toward this end.²⁶

However, García Linera's arrival at the peak of power would put his previous theories to the test: it was no longer just about analysing what was going on, but about interacting with a popular universe that, as Antonio Gramsci had previously noted, contained tendencies favourable to the disruption of the existing order. And this is especially true in the Bolivian case, where these conservative tendencies – very visible in the cultural and moral spheres – combine with strong corporatist allegiances, through which the popular sectors see the world, engage in politics and mobilise in defence of their interests. Furthermore, more mundane issues – such as patrimonialism, the constant particularistic retreats and the lack of politico-administrative agents – emerged as limitations to the

26. Stefanoni 2006.

original but no less uncertain 'democratic cultural revolution' (as the government has defined the new course followed by Bolivia since January 2006).

For some, the gradual moderation of the former mathematician's political and ideological positions ends here; for others, this moderation is just cosmetic, and conceals a never-abandoned radicalism. To justify this perspective, they rely on statements by García Linera such as those he made in Omasuyos on 20 September 2006, when, in a speech at a blockade, he said that in that combative Aymara region close to Lake Titicaca, 'we learned to love and to kill to defend our country and our natural resources', and he recalled his days with a 'gun under his poncho' when he was a guerrilla with the EGTK.²⁷

However, despite passing expressions of radicalism, the current vice-president has politically and intellectually upheld a negotiated solution to the conflict between the emerging indigenous-plebeian bloc in the west of the country and the hegemonic oligarchic-business bloc in Bolivia's eastern departments. With respect to the – somewhat opaque – debate about the so-called twenty-first century socialism advanced by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, García Linera has maintained that in Bolivia it is not possible to aspire to any prospective post-neoliberal scenario beyond the limits of consolidating an Andean-Amazonian capitalism.

But, more than just a 'theory', Andean capitalism consists of several proposals tied to an combination of modern (capitalist) and traditional forms of (communitarian-microenterprise) economy, with the state serving as the architect of strengthening the latter by means of strengthening technology and resources. Thus, the objective is not to modernise the country in a homogenising fashion (as occurred in the old Latin-American developmentalism), but rather to imagine a 'pluralist modernisation' that recognises Bolivia's *multicoloured* character. Still, the heart of 'post-neoliberal politics' in practice includes a partial revival of 1950s-style developmentalism, which is economically based on recovering state-control of the hydrocarbons-industry (this being nationalised on 1 May 2006), forcing transnational companies to sign new contracts with the state-owned company *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos* ('Bolivian State Oilfields', YPFB) and to pay higher taxes.

Perhaps García Linera's most significant political-ideological evolution is his shift – with few intermediate steps – from his 'autonomist' positions to an almost Hegelian defence of the state as a synthesis of the 'general will'. But let us leave it to the vice-president himself to explain this change:

In the mobilisations [since 2000], an enormous community-potential had accumulated, an enormous universalist potential, an enormous autonomist

27. *Los Tiempos* (Cochabamba) 2006.

potential. Prior to the social mobilisations, I saw great possibilities for autonomism, self-management and communism. When the mobilisations started to take shape, we saw their enormous potential, but we also became aware of their limits emerging. I remember that, starting in 2002, we started to have a much clearer understanding and to speak about the nature of the revolution as democratic and decolonising. And we said: we still do not see communism. Because of our teaching, we had seen the possibility of communism in a strong, self-organised workers' movement, which does not exist today, but which may emerge again in twenty or thirty years.²⁸

And he adds:

In the 1990s, there was a total reshaping of the working-class condition, which disorganised everything that had gone before, leaving dispersed and fragmented micro-kernels of identity and of the capacity to self-organise. In the peasant-indigenous world, we saw enormous vitality in terms of political transformation, advances in equality, but enormous limitations and a lack of possibilities for communitarian ways of organising and producing wealth. We started to observe this with the water-issue in Cochabamba in 2000, and later, in 2003, with the difficulties with the supply of gas-cylinders in El Alto.²⁹

And, he continues:

So, how can we interpret all this? The general aspirations of the time are communist. And this communism will have to be built based on society's ability to self-organise and based on processes of creating and distributing of communitarian and self-managed wealth. But currently, it is clear that that is not our immediate future – this is, rather, focused on achieving equality, the redistribution of wealth, the extension of rights. Equality is fundamental, because it ruptures five centuries of structural inequality. This is the goal of this period, the point to which social forces can take us, not because we have established that this is how it should be, but because we see that it is so. Indeed, we started out looking at the movement with eyes hopeful and eager for communist aspirations. But we were serious and objective, in the social sense of the term, when we pointed out the movement's limitations. That is when we had a fight with several *compañeros* about what was possible. When I joined the government, what I did was validate this interpretation of the current period, and I began to work with it from the position of the state. So,

28. Svampa and Stefanoni 2007.

29. Ibid. This was even clearer in the 'Second Gas-War', in June 2005, when the social organisations were unable to ensure the supply of gas-cylinders and other basic products for the mobilised population, such that the blockades ended up weakening the inhabitants of El Alto themselves.

where does that leave communism? What can the state do with respect to these communist aspirations? Support as much as possible the development of society's autonomous organising capacities. That is as much as a state of the Left – a revolutionary state – can do. Broadening the base of the working class and the autonomy of the world of labour, strengthening forms of communitarian economy wherever there are community-networks, coordinations and projects. Without controlling them. In communitarianism, there is no cooptation or creation from above. We will never do that.³⁰

The selection of texts we present in this volume reflects the theoretical and political evolution of an intellectual whose 'research-agendas' were dictated, at first, by the necessities of political struggle (as an intellectual activist). Later, and without losing this perspective, García Linera's work became more consistently and firmly rooted in the academic sphere, with the autonomy and the rules of the game that this implies (now as a politically engaged academic). Ultimately, his work has moved into the sphere of institutional politics, with a new close combination of political and intellectual praxis.

Thus, this book can be read in several ways. On one hand, it is a sort of intellectual biography of the Bolivian vice-president. But, on the other hand, and even more importantly, the selection of articles helps to understand the socio-political changes (analysed theoretically and sociologically) and the political future of Bolivia in the twenty-first century, at the same time that it allows glimpses of the ideological debates that run through its rich national political history. The history of a country that, to paraphrase James Dunkerley, carries rebellion in its blood.

30. Ibid.

I. The *Communist Manifesto* and our Present

The *Communist Manifesto* and Our Present: Four Theses on Its Historical Actuality¹

Why read the *Communist Manifesto* anew today? Why refer again to this short text, when we are separated from it by one hundred and fifty years of great transformations, historical events and experiences that put us at an enormous distance from it? A first attempt at an answer would be to say that the *Communist Manifesto* is a foundational text of the Marxist doctrine and, as such, if what is at issue is the vindication of Marxism, we must once more read and ‘apply’ this text.

Certainly, this answer speaks to a certain political commitment, but its error consists not only in validating its reading as an act of faith, but also in pulverising the very objective of the *Manifesto*, namely the radical critique of what exists – thus not the liturgical regurgitation of what was written in the past. This kind of exegesis corresponds to the practice of political sects and ministries that have turned Marxism into a pseudo-religious cult, with tiresome creeds, lists of saints, and bureaucratic machines to keep up the faith, excommunicate renegades and indoctrinate infidels. In their most monstrous version, these machines function as modern states, simply altering the doctrine that is to be inculcated among the ignorant people (nationalism, fascism, liberalism, state-socialism, and so on); in their primitive variant, they are small sects of devotees who take on militancy as an apostolic mission and who ultimately mistake their mystical-religious inclinations for political duty. Evidently, all claims to the

1. Translation of this chapter by Bécquer Medak-Seguín and Bruno Bosteels.

contrary notwithstanding, there is nothing Marxist to this type of encounter with the *Manifesto*.

A second type of reading takes the *Communist Manifesto* to be a historical text that may have been revelatory for the time in which it was written, but which today, in the face of the social changes that the world has witnessed with the collapse of 'socialisms', no longer has any relevance or, at best, is an archival treasure for historical ethnography. As compared to the first perspective we mentioned, this position does have the virtue of invoking actual reasons rather than hypostasised beliefs. However, the limitation of this position lies in the fact that it reduces social experience and creativity to a pile of disconnected acts in the evolution of history, unable to see how each is overcome and continued by another. History is not a linear and compartmentalised succession of events: it is an evolution of hierarchically distinguished and meaningful events, in which the most recent events arise on top of the existing field of possibilities set up by previous ones, and in which past happenings find their truth only in those still to come.

In the case of the *Communist Manifesto*, even though it owes its intelligibility to those features of nineteenth-century capitalist development studied and criticised in the text, we find a series of reflections on the fundamental components of the capitalist system that persist throughout the different moments of its development. This is precisely where the 'genetic information' that enables its historical existence is situated – its lasting presence as well as its twilight. A Marxist reading of the *Manifesto* draws its strength precisely from the disclosure of the text's intimate link with the extraordinary reality of present-day capitalism, its component-parts and the material conditions for its overcoming. The reading that I propose in what follows is meant precisely to demonstrate certain aspects of the actuality of the *Manifesto*, or, if you will, of how the present epoch is, in general terms, unable to overcome the historical era portrayed in the *Communist Manifesto*.

1. The planetary development of capitalism: the general subsumption of the world under capital

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries... that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed,

not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusions and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production.

One of the arguments often invoked by liberal currents to rule out the possibility of an alternative social system – one different from capitalism – is that economic globalisation has made it impossible to choose an autonomous course of development outside the world-market and the interdependence of productive, political and cultural activities.² This argument would be apt if we did maintain that there could be some path of economic progress parallel to, or in the margins of, that defined by capital. But we would then no longer be talking about Marx, but about the many ideological variants of state-nationalism, which, taking advantage of the boosting of the market and internal industrialisation favoured by Keynesian policies, thought that they could find in state-capitalism an anticipation of socialism, or, at least, an innovative ‘way of their own’ for achieving development without falling into the hands of the multinationals.³

Today, we know that import-substitution and the creation of an internal market, far from creating alternatives in the face of the development of world-capitalism, was, instead, one of its historical forms, allowing the domestication and bribing of the labouring classes, the disciplining of peasant-migrants in terms of citizenship, and the state creating millions of consumers of commodities ready to swell the multinationals’ customer-base once the import-tariffs had been lowered. Similarly, all that ‘actually-existing socialism’ was able to do was to roll out new ways for the state-controlled commodification of economic life, with social structures as motley as those of the countries of Eastern Europe.⁴

In the face of speculation about social ‘bubbles’ capable of taking on forms of development autonomous from and amidst capitalism, Marx revealed the immanent tendency of the logic of capital to universalise itself – or, to use his later terms, to subordinate, at first externally, the non-capitalist economic, cultural and ideological structures that it finds in its way, thus twisting them into conformity with its own ends of accumulation; and then it does so in real terms, by means of the material alteration of these structures, up to the point where

2. See Fukuyama 1992; Sakaiya 1991. For a critical view, see Touraine 2000.

3. Amin 1989; Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Frank 1970; Ianni 1975; Marini 1972; Vellinga (ed.) 1998; Malloy 1977; Kirsh 1977; Carrière (ed.) 1979.

4. Bettelheim 1978; Chavance 1988; Winiecki 1988; Palazuelos Manso 1990; Nove 1977; Claudin 1981.

they carry within themselves, amalgamated within their dynamic and thing-like structure, the rationality of commodity-value.⁵

Capitalism as a universal and universalising fact is the basic characterisation that runs through the entire *Manifesto* and on the basis of which Marx investigates the material possibility of communism. The first stage of world-expansion was the 'discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape', which, in encapsulating the world as a closed and knowable space, laid the ground for the intercommunication of the activities of each person with the rest of humanity. These events gave rise to a 'world-market' that put into circulation the products of labour from different socio-economic systems, albeit still on the basis of means of communication and transport that corresponded to the period of local exchange. This was the era of the predominance of commercial capital.

A second stage in this globalisation of capital was the incursion of capital into the local production of commodities itself, corroding and destroying all the old forms of labour. This gave rise to the development, in certain regions, of an eminently capitalist production and the formation of a material transportation-network, itself the product of industrial development (railways, shipping companies with steamships), so that the global commerce that had preceded and empowered industry now appeared as its outcome, insofar as the new technical and organisational apparatus of commerce had been produced by modern industry.

The third stage of this globalisation of capital discussed in the *Manifesto* is the extinction of 'the national ground of industry', not only leading to the unprecedented expansion of the capitalist form of labour to a growing number of regions linked to the world-market, but also, in order for capitalist production to maintain itself as such, having to do so by making use of the industrial products, raw materials and technologies produced in the most diverse regions of the globe. This last tendency outlined in the *Manifesto* was later used by Marx in order to understand how it was possible for the capitalist crisis of 1847–9 in Europe to have been overcome, for the time being, by the expansion of industrial capital from Europe to the rest of the world,⁶ and even in order to raise certain doubts as to the possibility of the victory of social revolution in Europe so long as capital continued to advance with great vigour into an ever wider geographical territory.⁷

5. Marx 1976a, sections 3, 4, 5, 7; Marx 1973a; García Linera 1995; Portes 1995; Portes, Castells and Benton (eds.) 1989.

6. Marx 1978a. For an excellent study of this work by Marx and its conception of the crisis, see Veraza 1993a. See also Hobsbawm 1996a.

7. Marx 1964. See also Marx and Engels 1985. In a letter to Engels, Marx noted: 'The proper task of bourgeois society is the creation of the world market, at least in outline, and of the production based on that market. Since the world is round, the colonisation

The current 'globalisation' of capital, far from casting doubt on Marx's critical thinking, is the historical presupposition on the basis of which he proposed to investigate the possibilities of its being overcome. 'Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all the members of society, can it be set in motion'.⁸ To speak of capital thus means to speak of the remodelling of the world as a totality for its domination; it means to speak of the ever-increasing yet always-incomplete tendency to subordinate commerce, transportation, production, knowledge, imagination, enjoyment, and consumption to the patterns of capital, whether in external-formal terms or in the real terms of its internal materiality.⁹ The fact that this is an ever-increasing but never-complete tendency depends on the fact that the only thing that is strictly not-capital but that is, at the same time, its source of life, is living labour, in its different corporeal forms: agrarian communities, but also, and now in the majority, the potential of labour in a state of flux, not yet objectified, that the social worker deploys in order to create material and symbolic wealth.¹⁰

The relevance and detail with which Marx unveiled this immanent quality of capital have the aim of laying the positive foundations for communism as the association of producers in which 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'. Of course, if capital – as a society of antagonisms, exploitation and private gain, like the previous societies divided into classes – arises on top of universal social labour, then the possibility of human emancipation as a whole is no longer a baseless hope. Rather, we find in this universality,

of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan would seem to have completed this process. For us, the difficult question is this: on the Continent revolution is imminent and will, moreover, instantly assume a socialist character. Will it not necessarily be crushed in this little corner of the earth, since the movement of bourgeois society is still in the ascendant over a far greater area?': Marx 1983a, p. 345.

8. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 236.

9. On the globalised character of capitalism from its beginnings, see Wallerstein 1974; 1980; 1989; Holloway and Bonefeld (eds.) 1995a; Holloway 1996; Holloway and Bonefeld 1995b.

10. 'The only thing distinct from *objectified* labour is *non-objectified* labour, labour which is still objectifying itself, *labour* as subjectivity. Or, *objectified* labour, i.e. labour which is *present in space*, can also be opposed, as *past labour*, to labour which is *present in time*. If it is to be present in time, alive, then it can be present only as the *living subject*, in which it exists as capacity, as possibility; hence as *worker*. . . . Labour posited as *not-capital* as such is: (1) *not-objectified labour, conceived negatively* (itself still objective; the non-objective itself in objective form). As such it is not-raw-material, not-instrument of labour, not-raw-product: labour separated from all means and objects of labour, from its entire objectivity. This living labour, existing as an *abstraction* from these moments of its actual reality (also, not-value) . . .': Marx 1973a, pp. 272, 295. Capital as objectified labour and living labour, as 'not-objectified labour', as 'the only thing distinct from capital', is the decisive point of departure for the Marxist concept of revolution and the revolution-ary subject.

perversely operated by capital, the material condition of possibility for a collective human activity that would no longer turn into private property and power, but the universal possession and power of the very producers that generate it.¹¹

The fact that the universalisation of labour, created for the first time in human history by capitalism, opens up the material possibilities for a joint action of human capacities and needs, does not mean that capital has deliberately produced this social interdependence, nor that the mere presence of this universalisation is directly going to create the imminence of communism. In fact, these misreadings are at the basis of the attitude of those numerous parties and intellectuals who claim to be Marxist and offer their services as enthusiastic flatterers of 'capitalist progress', since, they claim, this prepares the conditions for the transition to socialism.¹²

What these flatterers of capital fail to take into account – or, worse, dissimulate – is the fact that this universal interdependence rolled out by capitalism was neither advocated nor sought after by Marx: he simply described, explained, and investigated it, insofar as it is what unfolds 'before our own eyes'. But, what is more, the universalisation *created* by the development of capitalism *serves* this development and *is part of* this development of capital. In other words, universal interdependence is a *productive force of capital*, which, so long as it expands and concentrates itself, it does so as the expansion and concentration of the rationality of business and industry. The historical development of universality is the development of capital, meaning that any praise of or advocacy in favour of this expansion of universal interdependence means simply to advocate the development of capital, no matter how much one might justify it by saying that 'afterwards' socialism will come along as a historical afterthought.

Marx's attitude in the *Manifesto* toward this globalisation of capital consists simply in understanding it in all its implications, and, above all, in investigating its counter-finalities, the emancipatory potentials which are hidden therein but which appear, until now, deformed and distorted by the dominant capitalist rationality. The *Manifesto* invokes two dimensions in the arguments surrounding globalisation: on the one hand, the *concrete* dimension, the fact of globalisation being created by and for capital as a mechanism of generalised accumulation; and, on the other hand, the *abstract* dimension that is awoken yet permanently repressed by the former, expressing the positive interdependence of human-beings on a planetary scale, and whose significance is much greater than the miserable and frustrating way in which it has unfolded, up till now, under capitalism.

11. On universal communality, see Marx 1973a, pp. 159–61, 276–8.

12. In Bolivia, see the political literature of the PCB and POR.

This second, abstract dimension has come to the fore under the influence of the first, concrete dimension. However, the first is only a narrow and mutilated way of the possible unfolding of the second. And, what is more, in order for the second to be able to spill out into history requires the prior demolition and replacement of the first, since it tends toward nothing other than reproducing itself. The feasibility of this radical overcoming of the capitalist form of globalisation stems from the forceful argument that capital is simply the (alienated) fruit of social labour, a form of social labour that will have to give way, through a self-transformation that is nothing other than self-emancipation, to another form of social-universal labour, in which it will be able to recognise itself and share the fruits of its capacities for the common good.

Seen in this light, it also becomes clear that the current 'globalisation' of capital can be understood in its proper dimension and depth as a new stage of that universalisation of capitalism spoken of in the *Manifesto* – but, above all, as a stage whose critical analysis must bring to light the counter-finalities, the emancipatory counter-tendencies of labour against capital, materially nested within it, which Marxists must understand and empower by all means at their disposal.

In particular, what present-day liberals call – with an air of supposed novelty or ignorance – globalisation, is nothing but the existence of a world-market, something which had already begun to develop between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³ Perhaps what is specific, today, is the strong tendency to generalise the elements of *consumption* and the quality of the commodities whose circulation is encouraged – as in the case of money¹⁴ – or limited by means of

13. Wallerstein, 1974; 1980; 1989. In the Andean region, mining production, as well as the communal activity that went with it, narrowly tied itself to commerce and European production at the end of the sixteenth century; this happened not only in monetary, but also in technological terms. See Tandeter 1992; Bakewell 1984.

14. 'As critics of the notion of globalization have pointed out, many of the tendencies that go under that name are not new at all. The newness of the so-called "information revolution" is impressive, "but the newness of the railroad and the telegraph, the automobile, the radio, and the telephone in their day impressed equally" [Harvey 1995, p. 9]. Even the so-called "virtualisation of economic activity" is not as new as it may appear at first sight. "Submarine telegraph cables from the 1860s onwards connected inter-continental markets. They made possible day-to-day trading and price-making across thousands of miles, a far greater innovation than the advent of electronic trading today. Chicago and London, Melbourne and Manchester were linked in close to real time. Bond markets also became closely interconnected, and large-scale international lending – both portfolio and direct investment – grew rapidly during this period' [Hirst 1996, p. 3]. Indeed, foreign direct investment (FDI) grew so rapidly that in 1913 it amounted to over 9 percent of world output – a proportion still unsurpassed in the early 1990s [Bairoch and Kozul-Wright 1996, p. 10]. Similarly, the openness to foreign trade – as measured by imports and exports combined as a proportion of GDP – was not markedly greater in 1993 than in 1913 for all major capitalist countries except the United States [Hirst 1996, pp. 3–4]. To be sure, as [Helleiner 1997 and Sassen 1997] underscore from different perspectives, the most spectacular expansion of the last two decades, and the strongest

despotic state-protectionist policies – as in the case of the commodity of labour-power, which is prevented from moving freely from South to North.

Nor does the singularity of the current form of globalisation lie in the expansion of capitalist production to all the corners of the world, since this had already intensified by around the mid-nineteenth century, as a way of overcoming the crisis of capitalism in Europe. It is no coincidence that Marx, starting in the 1850s, shifted his attention from Europe to the East and to America, to their communal and agricultural structures, for this was precisely the ‘field of the world’ that was beginning to be the object of formal and real subsumption under capital.¹⁵ The Russian Revolution – which, in general, is taken to be an argument either for the decadence of capitalism, in the case of leftists, or for the failure of any revolutionary anti-capitalist effort, in the case of observers from the Right – acquires another meaning in the light of its ultimate outcome. That is, in its limited ability to expand itself on a planetary scale so as to strengthen the Russian workers’ embryonic forms of self-government and self-management in the towns and countryside, the Revolution turned into a national bourgeois revolution, which, through imperialist and state-capitalist forms, continued capitalism’s wave of expansion from the centre toward the ‘extremities’ of its worldwide geographical body. What is most relevant in this process of expansion of capitalist production across the globe is the widening of the abyss that separates countries and com-

piece of evidence in the armory of advocates of the globalisation thesis, has not been in FDI or world trade but in world financial markets. ‘Since 1980 – notes Saskia Sas- sen – ‘the total value of financial assets has increased two and a half times faster than aggregate GDP of all rich industrial economies. And the volume of trading in currencies, bonds and equities has increased five times faster’. The first to ‘globalize’ and today ‘the biggest and in many ways the only true global market’ is the foreign exchange market. ‘Foreign exchange transactions were ten times larger than world trade in 1983; only ten years later, in 1992, they were sixty times larger’ [Assen 1996, p. 40]. In the absence of this explosive growth in world financial markets, we would probably not be speaking of globalisation, and certainly not as a departure from the ongoing process of world-market reconstruction launched under US hegemony in the wake of the Second World War. After all, ‘Bretton Woods was a global system, so what really happened here was a shift from one global system (hierarchically organized and largely controlled politically by the United States) to another global system that was more decentralized and coordinated through the market, making the financial conditions of capitalism far more volatile and far more unstable. The rhetoric that accompanied this shift was deeply implicated in the promotion of the term ‘globalization’ as a virtue. In my more cynical moments I find myself thinking that it was the financial press that conned us all (myself included) into believing in ‘globalization’ as something new when it was nothing more than a promotional gimmick to make the best of a necessary adjustment in the system of international finance’ [Harvey 1995, p. 8]. See Arrighi 2007.

15. See Marx’s writings on India, China, Latin America, Ireland, Turkey, Spain, Russia, and so on, published in different periods after 1852, or present in his letters and manuscripts in preparation for *Capital*. Some of these works can be found in Marx and Engels 1972a; 1972b; Marx 1952; 1968b; 1969a. Also see Marx 1973a, pp. 471–9.

panies that control the material conditions of production, invention and development of modern technologies, from countries and consumers only afforded limited access to the end-products, without being able to produce or change them. We are thus speaking of a colossal hierarchy that is becoming not only global, but also technological, among industries, regions and nations.

The current globalisation of capital, in actual fact, comes to be the continuation at a much more complex level of two of the three stages indicated as historical tendencies in the *Manifesto*:

a) The formation of a network of transportation and communications by and for industry. We have already said that a first moment in this real subsumption of the means of communication and transportation to capital took place beginning in the nineteenth century, with the modification of the technical and organisational apparatus in the sphere of circulation and distribution, which began to develop itself on a new technological basis created by industrial production (railroad, steamships, and so on)¹⁶ and, in many cases, as part of the production-process itself.¹⁷ We thus see the beginning of the capitalist production of a material network for worldwide commerce through these new means of transportation. This tendency progressed during the nineteenth century, with the telegraph, radio, and transportation by air, and nowadays has entered a new phase with fibre-optics, satellite-communication and the use of computers for the real-time interconnectivity of banks, commerce and transportation. If we look closely, we see that what this new technological basis does is tighten the real subsumption of the globalised means of intercommunication under capital, initiated more than a century ago. The peculiar nature of this new moment of the globalised subordination of the means of communication and transportation lies in the fact that it is creating a homogeneous worldwide *time of communication* that tends to converge toward zero. This means that the new technological foundation is creating, on the one hand, an increasing uniformity in the times of circulation and distribution of the products from one factory, country or region with that of any other factory, country or region on the planet; and, on the other hand, the time it takes to transport raw materials, machines, capital, consumer-products or labour-power, both inside workshops or countries and between distant regions of the world, tends towards zero. Today, the stock-market and satellite-communication allow the movement of capital and investments from

16. See the correspondence between Marx, Engels, and Nikolai Danielson in Marx and Engels 1972a. See also the letters between Marx and Engels in the 1850s (in Volumes 38–40 of the *Marx and Engels Collected Works*); and Lenin's study of it: Lenin 1977, pp. 552–8; Lenin 1976.

17. Marx 1976a, pp. 492–642; and the so-called 'Historico-Technological Notebook' (known as B-56, composed in London in 1851).

one country to another in a matter of minutes; intellectual production can flow simultaneously all across the world; and products and people can move from one continent to another in a matter of hours, when this used to take months or weeks. On the basis of this remodelling of the worldwide communications-base, there arises:

b) A globalised basis for production itself. We have already seen how the *Manifesto* uncovers this tendency, with the rise of industries that employ neither raw materials nor technologies produced locally, and which, moreover, produce commodities that must be realised through a consumption that is itself just as globalised. This new moment in globalisation comes to be located in the beginning of a process of labour that is immediately planetary in nature. That is, not only does the very activity of producing a determinate good require raw materials, technology and markets in other parts of the planet, but the very act of producing a single material or symbolic good is accomplished not locally in a single workshop, but in multiple decentralised workshops located in different parts of the world, in accordance with the exploitation of labour-capacities, state-sponsored opportunities, and the concentration of the means of production that each region offers for the production of separate component-parts that can subsequently be assembled as a final product.¹⁸

We can, therefore, speak of a directly globalised labour-process, or, if one prefers, the world begins to appear as a *unified geographical space*, in which the complete activity of the production of any commodity must unfold. The possibility of this change in the specific production-relations, which converts the planet into a single workshop – of which regions and countries are thus only zones producing parts of the final product – is the result of the change in the structure of transportation and communication, the extent to which the enormous reduction of the time required for moving things and people allows for the simultaneous and interlinked functioning of partial production-processes spread out throughout the globe.

To be sure, this change in production is only just beginning (the sweatshops of the 1960s and 1970s were its starting point), but already the new level reached in the subordination of the world to capital is clear, insofar as time and geography, aside from being forced to adapt to the necessities of value-production – as has been the case thus far – also undergo a restructuring of their material significance and of our ways of being connected to them, such that they themselves appear as if productive forces of capital.

18. Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye 1980; Ceceña and Barreda (eds.) 1995; Palloix 1977; Ramírez Zaragoza 1992; Gutiérrez Garza 1989.

However, the *Manifesto* not only offers us the conceptual framework to make intelligible many of the 'novelties' of our own era; it does so precisely because it subjects them to critique, since it investigates the counter-finalities of these tendencies from the point of view of the potentialisation of emancipated social labour: 'The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products... The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie'.¹⁹ How come capital, by expanding its domination, potentially undermines the conditions of this same domination? Because by uniting, at the same time, the production and the productive consumption of the most diverse regions across the globe, the knowledge and labour-capacities of the most distant areas of the planet, it also creates the material and technological possibilities of an 'ever expanding union of workers',²⁰ insofar as it is their labour that is the social substance supporting the intercommunication and instantaneous interdependence of capital. Capital is only alienated labour, and thus the globalisation of capital is only the globalisation of labour, the interdependence of its capacities and necessities – but in an alienated way, falsified by private profit. The globalisation of capital is such because there already exists a globalisation of labour, except that it is repressed, forced to exist as the fetishised globalisation of things and money. The planetary triumph of capital which is today being celebrated depends upon the possibility of a planetary triumph of labour and, as a matter of fact, the celebrations of industry are but one more of the war-machines meant to imprison and deform this worldwide potential of labour.

And yet, this potential will never flourish on the basis of the progress of capital itself, since the latter is defined precisely by the uninterrupted colonisation, the systematic expropriation of the sum of social forces nestled within labour,²¹ and more specifically, in this case, the expropriation of its interdependence, of its universal communitarian basis, that which enables the generic human-being

19. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 233, 230.

20. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 229.

21. Referring to the argument that protectionism, by concentrating domestic social forces around local industries so as to make a common front against foreign competition, also strengthens the proletariat, Marx pointed to an obvious contradiction in this reasoning: 'The system of protective tariffs places in the hands of the capital of one country the weapons which enable it to defy the capital of other countries; it increases the strength of this capital in opposition to foreign capital, and at the same time it deludes itself that the very same means will make that same capital small and weak in opposition to the working class. In the last analysis that would mean appealing to the philanthropy of capital, as though capital as such could be a philanthropist. In general, social reforms can never be brought about by the weakness of the strong; they must and will be called to life by the strength of the weak': Marx 1976c, pp. 280–1.

to be a product of the labour of the whole set of existing human-beings. Plus its history, of course. In order for this force to blossom, what is needed is for the corporeal bearers of living labour to be able to recognise themselves, to desire themselves, to appropriate for themselves both materially and directly whatever they do in common, that is, on a planetary scale. The fact of this taking place is no longer the fruit of capital, but results from the self-construction of labour in the face of and above whatever capital makes of them on a daily basis. It is a matter of a process of self-negation²² of labour as labour-for-capital; that is to say, it is a matter of a political, cultural, subjective and material-organisational fact that demands that universal labour have the capacity to be self-forming and self-determining as a historical-universal subject. The conditions for this self-emancipation indicated in the *Manifesto* will be dealt with below.

2. Contemporary technological development: the material movement of the alienation of labour

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. . . . The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, applications of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents . . . Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine. . . . The less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labour, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labour of men superseded by that of women and children.

Our time is characterised by an extraordinary expansion of the means of communication, of consumption, and, above all, of production. If Marx's time saw the use of steam-engines, railways, telegraphs, and so on, today nuclear energy has opened up an inexhaustible source of energy to keep the machinery functioning. Research into material conductors is enabling the storage and transportation of gigantic quantities of information in ever more diminutive and efficient

22. Marx explained that modern capitalist society is a 'process of the self-alienation of labour', and thus 'communism is the position as the negation of the negation, and is hence the *actual* phase necessary for the next stage of historical development in the process of human emancipation and rehabilitation'. This self-negation of human self-alienation is what we call the self-negation of labour. See Marx 1968a, p. 146.

apparatuses; microbiology has created the possibility of deliberately changing the genetic structure of living organisms and of applying biological processes to other branches of productive labour; the computer, digital machines and robots are already indispensable in large parts of the productive industries in the world; and communicative technologies are converting the world into one giant workshop that decentralises partial functions across entire nations and continents.

The specific shape in which this change in the 'means of production' takes place is, certainly, very different from the one experienced a century ago, as is the amazingly vertiginous speed with which the 'means of production' have been revolutionised over the last decades, together with those new forms of knowledge that 'become antiquated before they can ossify'.²³

This overwhelming development of the means of labour, the means of communication, and the applied sciences, does, certainly, show a capitalist society of apparent vigour, capable of changing its own means of production, of continuing to raise the productivity of labour, and of changing productive conditions to satisfy certain social demands while bringing forth others.

But capital's obsession with transformation, this irrepressible drive to revolutionise the conditions of productions, is not synonymous with good health nor the guarantee of its indestructibility in the present. To believe, as contemporary conservative thinkers argue, that capitalism is today insuperable, because it continues to transform the means of production and to increase the productivity of labour, means to think that the historical goal of capitalism is to revolutionise the material conditions of production and that it will ensure its survival so long as it does this. The error of this widely-held belief is that it replaces the implicit finality of the capitalist system (profit, the valorisation of value),²⁴ through the fetishisation of its means, with the transformation of the conditions of production.²⁵ Strangely enough, the same attitude can be seen in a certain confessional 'leftism' that claims to explain the debacle of capitalism, but does so in terms of its 'incapacity to keep developing the productive forces', as if therein lay the definition of the essence of this social structure. In this last case, paranoia acquires clinical traits, since in order to make their point these thinkers have to make invisible the evident transformation of the means of production over the last decades and the intensification of productivity in certain branches of production (telecommunications, microelectronics, computer-science, and so on),²⁶

23. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 223.

24. See Marx 1988a.

25. Ibid. See also Marcuse 1964; Habermas 1992.

26. Ceceña and Barreda (eds.) 1995; Coriat 1990; Borrus 1983; Kodama 1991; Gutiérrez Aguilar 1993; Elster 1983.

which are counteracting the unavoidable difficulties for accumulation that capitalism is currently experiencing on a global scale.

But these conservative and pseudo-leftist arguments emerge from one and the same framework that fetishises technology, its advancement or its paralysis, as the guarantee of the vitality or decrepitude of capital, as if technological development were singular, linear, and quantifiable on a transhistorical scale.

This nineteenth-century technologism forgets that the 'driving' force of capital is not 'conquests in the productive forces' and that, consequently, its collapse does not stem from its 'incapacity' to advance them. What moves capitalist society is the valorisation of value, the uninterrupted increase of monetary profit, and what must lead it to its grave is precisely the impossibility of continuing the spiral of valorisation. With such goals in mind, technology offers a means allowing value-production based on the movement of the production-process itself; and, just as the social function of the tools of work is defined by their owners' and controllers' intentionality of valorising value, which precedes and directs this function, the overcoming of capital is also not defined by the tools ('the degree of development of the productive forces') but by those who bear them, capable of setting up a new social rationality based on the satisfaction of social needs through labour. Let us have a closer look at all this.

As Marx shows in the *Manifesto*, capitalism is the result of means of production and exchange created 'from the ruins of feudal society'. On this material basis, formed in and by another mode of production, capital *qua* social relation emerges and develops. It is, thus, a formal development, insofar as it takes place on an inherited technological basis. However, this basis is partially refunctionalised so as to increase the accumulation of value. A real consolidation or, better, the conditions for its self-reproduction will come from the moment in which capital is capable of creating its own technological basis, of founding itself materially, and this will happen when the technical-organisational structure of the production-process appears as the result of capital itself, including the productive forces. To achieve this, capitalism will have to revolutionise – for its own sake and in function of itself – the material qualities of the means of production and the organisational modes of their consumption, capable of making the rationality of value into a technological process. In *Capital*, Marx called this the real subsumption of the labour-process under capital.²⁷ But just as it is only then that the value-system manages to consolidate the material foundations for its own unfolding, it does so by amalgamating the rationality of value with the thing-like quality of the means of production.²⁸ We can thus say that capital is capable of

27. See Marx 1976a; Veraza 1987; 1994; García Linera 1995.

28. In (the so-called 'missing') Chapter Six of *Capital*, Marx calls the means of production 'amalgamated social property'. See also Marx 1975.

creating its own conditions of development by imposing a stamp of its own on the material development of the productive forces, in this case by subordinating, or constraining, this development to the narrow strategy of valorising value.

As such, capitalism does not indiscriminately develop the productive forces, but mutilates them and represses them so that they may continue along the road that empowers the valorisation of value. It is a question of unilateralisation, which annuls the possibilities of a multilateral development of the material capacities of labour, encouraging only those capacities susceptible to serving, to being compelled to follow, the logic of value.

Capital thus subordinates the productive forces, both in their social form and in their material content; or, rather, it deforms their development in order to adapt them to its own ends. Hence, for example, the unilateral development of the technological forces of production, to the detriment of symbolic or associative productive forces; or the recurrent conversion of social, productive forces into destructive or nefarious forces (nuclear weapons, the destruction of the ozone-layer, and so on) that put at risk the very existence of the human-being; and, even on the terrain of technological means of production, the arbitrary empowerment of those that are the most appropriate for or most docile in incorporating the corporate greed and despotism of industry into their own movement and utility.

There are, then, no neutral or innocent productive forces. Each tool, each means of labour that is the fruit of contemporary society, *incorporates in its material quality* and in the forms of its use a set of social intentionalities, a set of dispositions that constrain capacities, prescribe behaviours, prioritise such and such knowledge, reject others, expand such and such group-behaviour and squash others according to the general historical requirements of the era that accompany the strategies for the valorisation of value. To paraphrase Bourdieu,²⁹ we are dealing, here, with a kind of technological *habitus*, implicit and not necessarily explicit among scientific creators and financiers, but which manifests itself in the moment of inventive creativity and its stimulus by the branches of industry. The full weight of the capitalist system's predisposition and desires comes crowding forward at the moment of the production of technologies, reconverting equipment less into an extension of the skill of the subject, than into a material extension of the epochal demands of the value-system, including forms of resistance that it must overcome and that it will generate anew. With modern productive forces, the alienation of labour thus also acquires a technological form.³⁰

29. Bourdieu 1992.

30. Marx 1973a.

The problem with the productive forces under capitalism – and what allows us to speak of the need to overcome this social system – is not that they do not develop: it is, rather, because they develop too much, because they ‘become too powerful’ for the present system, as Marx says, that it is possible to postulate the need for a new social system of production. It is not the visible scarcity of productive forces nor their stagnation, as the catastrophic nihilism of confessional leftism believes, but their tendential abundance, that leads capital to show its inefficient and retrograde character. The abundance of industry, commerce, or civilisation³¹ does not show the vitality of capital, but its limits, its impotence, because it finds itself ever more compelled to constrain the wealth that is potentially nested in those activities within the narrow interest of profit, within the worn-out vision of gain.

The universal interdependence of labour, creativity, general social intellect, science – all of them social capacities that have woken up to the influence of modern society and that carry within them an infinity of forces in the making, capable of fortifying human aptitudes and satisfying collective needs – are systematically being twisted so as to comply with the narrow discipline of profit. This is why capital ‘destroys’ the productive forces, imposing on them a development mutilated by valorisation; but no sooner does it proceed to this kind of mutilation than the productive forces thus developed as capital’s productive forces once again come to outline the latent potentialities that go beyond exchange-value and that are, once again, repressed, only to be reborn with increased strength. In fact, if there is one thing that drives the development of the productive forces under capitalism – which, at bottom, is a development of and for capital – it is precisely the drive to drown, vanquish, capture and erode these resistances and autonomies erected by labour in the face of capital, resistances and autonomies which limit the self-valorisation of value and its own latent potentialities, which go beyond the value-form, beyond the commodity-form, and which are nested, albeit in an abstract way, within the productive forces themselves.³² In this sense, modern technologies are the most authentic and most alienated product of the workers; they are the fruit of the laboriousness and inventiveness of society on a worldwide scale: this is their transcendent side. At the same time, they emerge in order to snatch away the workers’ knowledge

31. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 223–4.

32. In his 1861–4 economic writings, Marx explains: ‘Strikes are taken on for this reason: to impede the reduction of wages or to achieve a salary increase or to set limits to the normal working day . . . against this the capitalist uses the introduction of machinery. Here the machine appears directly as a means to abridge the time of necessary labour; it also appears as a form of capital – a means of capital – the power of capital over labour to repress all possibility of autonomy on the part of labour. Here machinery also intentionally enters the stage as a form of capital hostile to labour’: See Marx 1994. See also Negri 1977; Negri and Guattari 1990.

and deposit it into the machine, to push back workers' resistance, to demolish proletarian conquests and organisational efforts, and to ramp up both the intensity and the volume of unpaid labour appropriated by capital.³³ The *actual* productive forces, for this reason, are material forces that on a daily basis enable and facilitate the alienation of labour, the self-loss of the worker's own creative capacity. This is why Marx talks of how, owing to industrial progress, 'the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character'.

It is due to this material motive, amalgamated with the thinghood of the means of labour, transportation, communication, enjoyment, and actual social knowledge, that the empowerment of a new social form of production does not come, or cannot come, from the 'automatic development' or merely lineal growth of the productive forces.³⁴ The development of the productive forces is and exists in our present actuality as the dominant development of capital, its dynamic, its intentionality, converted into a machine-tool, into knowledge. And even though this development is every day more partial, more contradictory, due to the kind of social potentials that it must subject and extort (labour and the universality of labour), it does not as such cease to produce capital. It is precisely these features of current technological innovations that allow us to distinguish the technological servility, so characteristic of conservatism on the Left and Right alike, from Marx's critical position.

When Marx referred to the momentum of the productive forces deployed by the bourgeoisie, he did so in a critical manner: that is, he found in the explication of its energy and accomplishments at the same time its limitations, its hidden fragilities, and its counter-finalities. Marx's emphasis on the development of the productive forces under capital did not have the mystifying meaning it has acquired in the hands of liberals and pseudo-leftists who focus on technology as the motor or halo that sets history in motion or slows it down. For Marx, the productive forces are a social relation, a relation of production different from others because it is a social relation objectified in the instruments and thing-like dispositions of matter; it is thus a social-natural materiality that allows for the grounding, or rooting, in the very objectivity of matter, of a set of social relations, practical intentionalities, and a whole historical development. It follows that his

33. 'Capital, however reformist it may be, never willingly passes to a subsequent or superior phase of the mode of production. In effect, capitalist innovation is always a product, a compromise or a response, in short a constraint which derives from workers' antagonism. From this point of view, capital often experiences progress as decline. And it is a decline, or, better, a deconstruction. Because the more radical the innovation is, the more profound and powerful were the antagonistic proletarian forces which had determined it, and therefore the more extreme was the force which capital had to put in motion to dominate them. Every innovation is a revolution which failed – but also one which was attempted': see Negri 1992.

34. See Stalin 1939.

treatment of the productive forces entailed a double dimension fused into one: that of their *social materiality* and that of their *physical materiality*, with the second subordinated to the first and operated by it, but in such a manner that the first acquires historical objectivity.

In order for the modern productive forces, so inexorably developed as the productive forces *of* capital, to reveal themselves as productive forces transcending capital, we cannot take them such as they are today.³⁵ They must be subjected to a practical critique so as to overcome the social intentionality and material thinghood of this intentionality present in the very structure of the instruments of labour, which objectively realise the alienation of labour into capital. The instruments of labour, the machines and applied sciences such as they are today, are structures for the disciplining of labour. Worse, they are structures for the coercion and estrangement of labour from its own capacities, because what these productive forces crystallise are the social capacities of social labour. As such, they are means for the alienation of labour. The overcoming of this technologised alienation of labour requires a critique of technology able to stand on their feet the multilateral potentialities that are nested therein. But this is not only a new social accord or a new and more conducive social intentionality: it is also, in order for this new social intentionality to be materially grounded, a new material structure for technology itself, a new form of machinery.³⁶

Marx's attitude toward industrial development is thus shown to be an evaluation implacably critical of its accomplishments. He does not address the productive forces in terms of what they do now – which, as Marx knows very well, is to

35. 'Industry can be regarded as a great workshop in which man first takes possession of his own forces and the forces of nature, objectifies himself and creates for himself the conditions for a human existence. When industry is regarded in this way, one *abstracts* from the circumstances in which it operates today, and in which it exists *as industry*; one's standpoint is not from within the industrial epoch, but *above* it; industry is regarded not by what it is for *man* today, but by what present-day man is for *human history*, what he is historically; it is not its present-day existence (not *industry* as such) that is recognised, but rather the power which industry has without knowing or willing it and which *destroys* it and creates the basis for a *human* existence.... This assessment of industry is then at the same time the recognition that the hour has come for it to be done away with, or for the abolition of the material and social conditions in which mankind has had to develop its abilities as a slave': See Marx 1975.

36. To List's argument, according to which 'the causes of wealth [the productive forces] are something quite different from the effect, from wealth itself [exchange-value]', Marx responded: 'But if the effect is different from the cause, must not the nature of the effect be contained already in the cause? The cause must already carry with it the determining feature that is manifested later in the effect.... Some light is already thrown for us on the essence of the present-day "productive forces" by the fact that in the present state of affairs productive force consists not only in, for instance, making man's labour more efficient or natural and social forces more effective, but just as much in making labour cheaper or more unproductive for the worker. Hence productive force is from the outset determined by exchange value': see Marx 1975.

enrich their private owners and to alienate labour – he considers them for what they potentially and abstractly contain for humanity, beyond the frustrating and miserable form in which they exist today. He sets his gaze not on what they do today, but in what they could do once the capitalist shell that oppresses and enchains them has been broken. He sets his eyes not on the present in order to consecrate it, but on the present in order to abolish it, starting precisely from the capacities and needs, the material and subjective potentialities that are latent and hidden within them. This is why his approach is critical: an implacable critique of our time, because it takes what exists as a point of departure to be negated by the very force that this present potentially habilitates. In this way, the future is positively and materially grounded as the negation of the present. This is the case, for example, of modern industrial progress.

Over the last century and a half, modern industry has been carrying out a double transformation of the relations of production, strictly speaking. On the one hand, it has incessantly increased the productivity of labour, new machines allowing for the reduction of the time required for a worker to produce a commodity, as compared to under the previous technological régime. In other words, the labour-time directly applied to each commodity and in each labour-process taken independently tends to become irrelevant in the face of general social labour; and the labour of each particular worker tends to become dissolved, in the commodity itself considered individually, into what Marx's *Grundrisse* termed 'the general productive force of the social individual'.³⁷

37. 'The exchange of living labour for objectified labour – i.e. the positing of social labour in the form of the contradiction of capital and wage labour – is the ultimate development of the *value-relation* and of production resting on value. Its presupposition is – and remains – the mass of direct labour time, the quantity of labour employed, as the determinant factor in the production of wealth. But to the degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labour time, whose 'powerful effectiveness' is itself in turn out of all proportion to the direct labour time spent on their production, but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology, or the application of this science to production. ... Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather, the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself. ... No longer does the labourer insert a modified natural object as middle link between the object and himself; rather, he inserts the process of nature which he transforms into an industrial process, as means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it. He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its main agency. In this transformation, it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive force, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it through his existence [*Dasein*] as social body – it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth. The *theft of alien labour-time, on which the present wealth is based*, appears a miserable foundation in the face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself.

On the other hand, the employment of machines, computerised controls and robots, in the last few decades, has come to create a new organic composition of the consumption of labour-power, by prioritising – at least in those branches of production with the greatest technological investment – the consumption of intellectual labour-power, and tendentially, at least, by sidelining the muscular part of labour-power. Machines replace physical-muscular labour, amplifying the exaction of intellectual labour from those workers within the production-processes.³⁸ The so-called ‘end of work’,³⁹ ‘third wave’, or ‘knowledge-society’, are just so many rhetorical characterisations of this social and technological transformation in the form in which workers’ labour-power is employed in the process of production, which, far from erasing the conditions of exploitation, instead rolls them out over a much vaster space. It is no longer a question only of the dominion of the grand designs of capital over scientific labour by means of intensifying the ties that link science, as one sphere in the division of labour, with production.

Of course, human labour considered in its intellectual and creative component⁴⁰ is part of the most strictly human labour-power, which is irreplaceable by machines; and it is precisely this labour that has been subordinated, in the last decades, to the development of capital within the very processes of industrial labour. Strictly speaking we find ourselves before a general subordination of the *intellectual capacity* of workers’ labour-power as a pivotal and final part of the subordination of the labour-process to capital. The aim behind the modern

As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The *surplus labour of the mass* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis’: Marx 1973a, pp. 704–6.

38. Coriat 1979; Koiké 1988.

39. Rifkin 1995.

40. ‘The use of labour-power is labour itself. . . . Labour is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. . . . At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes [*verwirklicht*] his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it. This subordination is no mere momentary act. Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work. This means close attention’: Marx 1976a, pp. 283–4.

technologies that spread all across the world is to create a globalised material basis for this renewed subjection of labour to capital.

The first moment in this technological subjugation of labour is explicitly addressed in the *Communist Manifesto*, when Marx refers to the increase in productivity and the devalorisation of physical skill in labour with the advent of major industry and automatic machinery.

The results of this gradual transformation of labour-activity are clear: subjugation of the worker to the machine, before which the worker appears as 'an appendage' who must realise only 'the most simple, the most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack', leading to a situation where the labour of children and women may come to replace that of men.

The political consequences of this change include the erosion of trade-based forms of workers' organisation; the deskilling of work; and the routinisation of working activities, which, in the twentieth century, received a stronger technological-organisational foundation thanks to Fordism and Taylorism.⁴¹

A second moment in this real subordination is that indicated in abstract terms by Marx, when he spoke about the protagonism of social labour considered as a global fact, over and above individual labour, within the production-process. This process, whose beginnings can be located in the nineteenth century, has taken on two new dimensions in recent decades. The first dimension is an increasing socialisation of the main forms of high-tech production. Whether we are talking about the development of microprocessors, subatomic-particle accelerators, artificial intelligence, or semiconductors, the material conditions for invention and production in these branches of applied knowledge, which is where the development of the modern productive forces is concentrated, can now only be undertaken through the collective activity of research-centres in various corporations at the same time, or else through the association of state-subsidies with various nations' armies of scientists. The dimension of social materiality required to engage in these investigations, both in terms of infrastructure (fixed capital) as well as the volume of knowledge and the depth thereof (specialised labour-power) has rendered obsolete the old researcher, who, working in isolation, from the patio of his house or his desk at his university, offered the use of his invention to humanity. Today, scientific knowledge and its technological application require the interconnected work of networks of numerous laboratories and investment from various countries, in order for them to achieve significant advances in their area of study. We can say that we are witnessing a radical elevation of the *organic composition* of the processes of scientific production,

41. Coriat 1991a; Gramsci 1971.

which tend to make the material possibility of their continuation or advance depend on their own social-global structure.

The second dimension: the form of a configuration of the material consumption of labour-power that prioritises the material subordination of the intellectual and creative aspect existing within this labour, above the purely muscular-physical; and the ever-more irrelevant meaning of direct labour, applied to the product in the labour-process, as compared to the 'direct productive force' of the general social intellect, of knowledge, of which the very labour of the worker is a part.

The importance of the development of this tendency, described later on in the *Grundrisse* with a lucidity astonishing even in our time, resides in the fact that 'labour in a direct form ceases to be the great source of wealth', since the time of *direct* labour of the worker applied (and exploited) during production, as well as the time during which he works, potentially cease to be the measure of this wealth, because they tend to reveal themselves as a 'miserable ground' compared to the field of possible materials that open up the presence of the 'general productive force' or general social intellect. We thus see how knowledge becomes a direct productive force and conditioning factor in the production-process under three specific historical forms: as machines or 'objectified potentialities of knowledge';⁴² as a 'combination of human activities'⁴³ or new forms of organisation of labour;⁴⁴ and as the worker's intellectual labour-power, or a new form of the consumption of labour-power in production,⁴⁵ which adds to and

42. 'Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules, etc. These are the products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are *organs of the human brain, created by the human hand*; the power of knowledge, objectified [in Spanish, this is translated as *la potencia objetivada del saber*]: Marx 1973a, p. 706.

43. Marx 1973a, p. 705.

44. The various 'post-Fordist' forms of regulating the production-process and the modern forms of the articulation-subordination of capitalist activities to the domestic economy, artisanal, peasant and communitarian production, have as one of their axes the reorganisation of the forms of labour-organisation. Whether on the basis of team-work or the multifunctionality of workers ('Toyotism'), the absorption of local bonds, skills and cultures (Italian 'diffuse' industrialisation) or the refunctionalisation of domestic-communal knowledges and familial fidelities (as in Bolivia), the development of capitalist accumulation implements, together with the technical transformation of the labour-process, also various modifications in the interconnection and interdependence of the labouring subjects in an industrial centre, area, country or, indeed, worldwide. See Coriat 1991b; Goodman and Bamford (eds.) 1988; López Novo 1988; Lomnitz 1985; Golte and Adams 1987; Godbout and Calle 2001; Portes 1995; Rivera Cusicanqui 1996; García Linera 1997.

45. In the three examples quoted in the previous note, what is indicated is the productive absorption of the social knowledge of which the workers are the bearers: in the case of 'Toyotism', through the assimilation of the workers' initiative into corporate

rounds up the meaning of the technological transformations and organisational variations of social labour. Slowly, the 'general social intellect' posits itself as the most important productive force of social labour, and this not simply because it is one of the branches in the division of labour, but also in the organisational fact of production and the social form of existence of the worker's capacity for labour within the labour-process.

But this is a contradiction that is immanent to capital itself, for this miserable system is erected precisely on the basis of the 'theft of labour time' (as Marx wrote in the *Grundrisse*). In itself and for itself, society based on exchange-value, in its desire for profit, begins, albeit abstractly, to generate its own possibilities for overcoming exchange-value as the measure of wealth, that is, the rule of capital.

Yet this potential, which is so evident today in the various branches of high technology (biotechnology, telecommunications, microchips, and so on) is systematically being drowned-out and distorted for the ends of the valorisation of value. Even if the importance of the time of direct labour in the production of each commodity diminishes, this is only because it helps broaden the time of surplus-labour within the totality of the working day, since the worker is capable of reproducing the part of his labour-time that is paid (the wage) during a shorter period of labour-time. Even if the machine replaces the worker's direct labour-time, in actual fact, this is only so as to diminish simple, manual labour and absorb ever more complex intellectual and muscular labour-time. Even if the machine renders easier the active functions of work, under capital it does so in order to atomise and fragment the material conditions of labour-organisation and so as to push forward by technical means the industry's corporate despotism over the worker.

In other words, capital rolls out the potentials of social labour only as abstraction, as forces that are constantly subordinated and castrated by the rationality of commodity-value. The fact that these tendencies may come to the surface is no longer an issue of capital, which, while it exists, will never allow them to flourish for themselves; it is an issue of labour over and against capital, on the basis of what capital has done thus far.

Even the crisis itself – the moment when this contradiction of the movement called capital is revealed with the greatest intensity, when the impotence of capital rises to the surface with unheard-of violence – for want of the mass intervention of the objective-subjective accumulation of labour's self-construction in the

productivity; in the case of areas of diffuse industrialisation, through the incorporation of productive knowledges from the local population in function of the new industries; and, finally, through the conversion of bonds of mutual and non-commodified support into mechanisms of valorisation of capital, small and large.

face of capital, then such crises, which shamelessly lay bare the impotence of the modern logic of reproduction, will become additional forces impelling capitalism forward again, devouring the future. How does the bourgeoisie overcome this crisis, Marx asked himself: 'On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones'.⁴⁶ The productive forces of capital thus appear as forces that are destructive of humanity, destructive forces that send capital looking to conquer new areas (formal subsumption) and exploit old ones (real subsumption at a new level, to the point of reaching the very source of labour-power). Destruction thus emerges as the co-production of capital; and what appears, from the historical vantage-point, to be manifest impotence, appears as capital's power, dragging it out of the mire.

There is, therefore, no development of the productive forces and no crisis that automatically prepares the collapse of capitalism.⁴⁷ What these do, in themselves, is increase the space for the realisation of capital. In order for the productive forces to lay the material conditions for a new society and for crises to lead to the death-agony of the civilisation of value, what needs to be deployed from within these latter – from within the productive forces and the crises – are the forces of the self-organisation of labour. That is, there needs to be a breakthrough in an accumulation of ruptures, both situated and totalising, away from the form of development of the productive forces by-and-for capital, so as to reconvert them into productive forces of labour. Moreover, the crisis, which brings to light the tangible impotence of capital, must, at the same time, be the open manifestation of the power of labour reappropriated by labour itself in the guise of self-consciousness and self-emancipation.

Precisely this is one of the great historical weaknesses of labour in the present moment; labour which, in contrast to Marx's experience, reveals itself in the face of capital as a pulverised power, restructured by capital for its own ends. The Revolution of 1848 – to this day, the only modern revolution where capital, in its own way on a continental scale,⁴⁸ stared death in the face – was able to acquire such a dimension because the larval resistance, the silent and open rebellions of labour in the labour-process and in society, which were manifest as forms of capital's impotence to continue subordinating labour in the way that it had been doing up to that point, took the form of a general economic and political crisis which reached all the way down to the fundamental level of capitalist space (bound to the European continent). The production-crisis, which initially involved only a few branches of industry in England, precisely due to the relations

46. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 226.

47. Grossman 1992; Colletti and Napoleoni (eds.) 1970.

48. Veraza 1998; 1993b.

of interdependence articulated itself into a chain of successive (though not simultaneous) events, with various forms of resistance and labour-insurgencies in the local space of circulation and, later, the productive-reproductive space of the whole continent, leading the crisis to become a revolution.⁴⁹

The crisis can be seen initially as a fragmented moment of the emergent powers of labour, which, as a qualified end-sum, generate a point of bifurcation starting from which capital can no longer reproduce itself as it has previously. Capital manifests itself as impotence, as an explicit incapacity for regular continuity, and thus as the euphoric quest for new patterns of rendering labour more docile. At this level of social condensation, capital imposes itself as a dense flow of explosive antagonisms in a state of flux; but so, too, do the forces of labour, whose insubordination begins to produce counter-finalities that turn against capital. Such is the case of the unemployment or monetary devaluation so typical of every crisis, which attempt to augment popular and working-class competition to secure the conditions of physical reproduction. This is the moment when the crisis presents itself as the preparation for the relaunching of capital, which, as a whole, tries to overcome the fragmented productive and consumptive insolences of labour.

This began to happen in England and Europe after 1847, and on a global scale after 1870. But this crisis of capitalism would, in the Europe of 1848, culminate in a revolution, whereby it became possible to question the vitality – both the social meaning of the means of work and the meaning of the system of capital as such – because these labour-dissidences had the capacity not only to unite amongst themselves at the level of multiple branches and sectors of production, circulation and consumption, and, finally, at the national level; but also of forging embryonic links at the continental level, albeit in the form of multiple forms of identity: the working class in France and parts of England; bourgeois in Germany and Switzerland; national in Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and so on. Labour, in various forms of aggregation both borrowed and proper to it, will set itself in motion against the existing state of affairs, which, at this stage in history, and in spite of the presence of pre- or semi-capitalist production-relations, is controlled by capital.

Neither then – nor, much less, today – did the possibility of this social act of political insurgency depend on a mere aggravation of hardships. The masses are no rats or Pavlov's dogs that respond according to the intensity of the electric shocks. In fact, the Revolution initiated in 1848 reached the crest of the wave when economic difficulties diminished.⁵⁰ The crisis underwent a revolutionary metamorphosis, because in the collective experience of the labouring masses,

49. Hobsbawm 1996b; Claudin 1985.

50. Marx 1978a.

there was simultaneously an influx of a set of experiences of insubordination with a long prehistory. At least from the time of the rebellions in France of 1830, there had been developed a fertile terrain for collective will, networks for the cross-continental organisation of labour, and practical experiences rationalised as common sense in action, which were then unleashed and accentuated at the moment of the first revolutionary explosions of 1848 in Paris.

There exists an accumulated history that – and this is decisive – is externalised in the attitudes of a collective subject that is proletarianised (France) or in the process of proletarianisation (Germany, Spain Italy), or else national or in the process of nationalisation (Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland). It is a collective subject with a long prehistory: that is, a social subject whose material structure has been composed through over fifty years of expansion (since the French Revolution of 1789) and, hence, the bearer of a collective subjectivity capable of recognising its own practical activity in the practical activity of others, and vice-versa. Paraphrasing Marx's words from 1860,⁵¹ there was the active fact of a 'party' of labour in the 'broad historical sense of the term', that is, as the movement of labour's collective self-construction as against the dominant powers (the bourgeoisie in France and England; the absolutist empires in Austria, Russia and Italy; the landowning aristocracy in Germany; and so on); a movement of social self-construction that, even though it comprised multiple 'ephemeral' forms of organisation (secret or public workers' leagues, guilds, trade-unions, movements for national autonomy, newspapers, personalities), was capable of acting as a network as soon as the rebellions in one place or another got started.

By contrast, the current situation of the world since 1970 is very different. The crisis of over-accumulation that would manifest itself as the crisis of the so-called Fordist-Taylorist form of management and of the 'welfare-state' that accompanied it,⁵² has its roots in the accumulation of dissidences, forms of insubordination and new working and consumption-demands that the global mass of labour, in a dispersed yet simultaneous fashion, began to deploy some years ago. The hope of overcoming these obstacles to valorisation on the sole basis of the intensification of the previous technological and organisational form of development, only served to spark off the crisis again, only now in the sense of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, based on a median historical composition of capital and a form of the consumption of labour-power that had prevailed since the 1940s.

51. 'After the Ligue [of Communists] dissolved in November 1852, at my behest, I never belonged to any society again, whether *secret* or *public*; the *party*, therefore, in this wholly ephemeral sense, ceased to exist for me 8 years ago ... By party, I meant the party in the broad historical sense': Marx 1985a, pp. 81, 87.

52. Palazuelos Manso (ed.) 1988; Santín Moral and Raimond 1986; Mandel 1995; López Díaz (ed.) 1989; Gutiérrez Aguilar 1990.

As could not happen otherwise, capital ever since has sought to restructure its material relations of power over labour so as to overcome this crisis. To do so, capital has proceeded in various different ways, which are today known as 'neoliberal reforms':

- a) The dismantling of the welfare-state by arbitrarily renouncing the pacts between management, state, and the part of the workforce organised in unions. A dramatic reduction of the price of labour-power, through the weakening or the extinction of social security and guaranteed work.
- b) A material slimming down of major industrial centres; fragmentation of production to decentralise expensive labour-power and avoid the risk of its geographical concentration. Production in networks and globalisation of the immediate labour-process.
- c) A violent campaign against the traditional structure of the workforce, especially trade-union but also cultural or community-based.
- d) The heightened disciplining of labour according to the canons of individualised behaviour and property; control of the citizenry by way of the atomised interpellation of the taxpayer (individual ownership).
- e) Derecognition of collective working-class structures (unions, associations, and so on) as valid interlocutors for the state. Dissolution of the forms of citizenship (acquisition of public rights) operating by means of unionisation. A huge offensive to give a monopoly on all legitimate forms of political management to the parties and the ritual of elections. Globalisation of a pseudo-democracy, which simulates a mediation between civil society and the state.
- f) Transformation of the forms of labour-organisation in the production, circulation and distribution of commodities: involvement of workers in the quality-control of products (surveillance of workers, quality-checking circles); multifunctional labour and the breakdown of traditional forms of promotion through seniority.
- g) A tendential variation in the form of the consumption of labour-power: an increasing substitution of the use-value of labour-power, defined in terms of muscular strength, and prioritisation of the other organic component of labour-power, the intellectual and communitarian capacity employed within the labour-process.
- h) Technological innovation capable of objectifying these social transformations in the mechanical movement of the means of production. Robotic and cybernetic automation of many traditional labour-activities.
- i) A refunctionalisation of non-capitalist technologies, labour-structures, communitarian formations, knowledges and experiences, in function of capitalist accumulation. The rigid subordination of the workforces of agrarian

communities, urban domestic units, urban communities, relations of kinship, prestige, and religious and local loyalties, in function of the valorisation of strictly capitalist (industrial, commercial and financial) branches. Complexification of the material identity of labour.

- j) A new international division of labour.
- k) A quest for a new organic composition of capital on a planetary and historical scale, condensing both materially and organisationally the subjugation of labour to capital, capable of boosting a new wave of the planetary expansion of capitalism.

Each of these changes, wherever they have happened, has provoked renewed processes of resistance, but of a very different social nature than the struggles and discontents of a hundred and thirty years ago.

In the first place, it is a question of purely defensive struggles, or, what amounts to the same thing, struggles situated within a horizon determined by the past. The paths orienting the abundant and dispersed labour-resistances have been marked by an attitude evoking the old pacts, the old social benefits, which were nothing more than the particular historical forms of the dominion of capital. By reducing themselves to quarrelling over a return to the previous *status quo*, the resistance-struggles revealed a conservatism that, though understandable, was not only fatal, but also outdated, from the very moment that is eulogises about a situation of subjection that even the dominant powers left behind as obsolete a long time ago. The ghosts of the dead weigh down on the brains of the living, who yearn for a now-vanished past which the practical arrogance of the real beneficiaries has now overtaken. It is true that this act of historical reminiscence contains a defence of the little that we previously did have, but this is precisely what is important, here, insofar as we are dealing with a conscious yearning for a previous oppression endorsed by the rights that were asserted and won. In a strange and disconcerting way, the slave follows the tracks back to his chains in order to vindicate them as a programme, and, in doing so, voluntarily hands over the banners of 'reform' to precisely those people who incarnate its negation.

From this perspective, the future is a form of paralysis, or, worse, a regression. The proactive attitude of the insurgent masses, so typical of revolutions, is here replaced by an entrenched fear of losing their past chains. The world does not present itself as a world to be gained, but as a world to be rejected and conserved in the way it was passed on to us. There is no good submission that leads to emancipation, and this is what produces the tragic experience of the forces of labour shocked to see how 'all that is solid melts into air' (as Shakespeare put it). There is no lack of cheerleaders who lionise popular submission in the name of an ideal revolution, an idea that toys with the delirium of the narrow-minded little confessional sects proclaiming themselves 'vanguards'.

At this point of abandoning the historical initiative, instead of connecting and expanding, the resistances contract, the task at hand being to preserve – against the rest, against the powers-that-be and the other (majoritarian) sectors of unprotected subalterns – the few small privileges that were previously won. Resistance is metamorphosed into internal competition among workers, between those who still have a little something and want to defend it for themselves, and an immense new mass of workers who go without any such benefits.

As such, the sum of local resistances does not reach a crossroads that integrates them together; on the contrary, each new resistance once again atomises the field of labour-struggles. The modern material fragmentation of production will thereby meet its organisational and intersubjective correlate, giving way to the prevalence of that *a priori* individualism which, even within the popular sectors themselves, is nothing other than its social constitution in the terms of private owners and salesmen. The struggle thus no longer presents itself so much as an expansive social construction, so much as a corporatist ‘holing up’; the point is a ‘struggle against the bourgeoisie to save their existence from ruin’, as is the wont of certain middle-strata that, given their content, are, from the point of view of the *Communist Manifesto*, ‘therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history’.⁵³ The immense majority of the struggles of unionised workers, teachers and the various sectors corporatively recognised by the old welfare-state, currently being hit hard by the neoliberal state, have been following this trajectory and certain fate of prolonged defeat for almost two decades, now.⁵⁴

The fact that this happens in this fashion does, certainly, speak to a growing conservative consciousness, a deeply rooted practical disposition of the largest unionised sectors of the worldwide proletariat to revive a struggle against capital conceived of as mere bargaining over the concessions and rights framing their subordination. This *habitus*, carved out by the bribes of the welfare-state and

53. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 231.

54. In the case of the COB [*Central Obrera Boliviana*], the problem of its strategies for struggle does not lie in the fact that it has no ‘culture of consensus’, as a whole school of writers-courtiers claim (such as Lazarte, Toranzo, and Mayorga). The limitations of its social activism and the reasons why it today appears as a corpse reside, instead, precisely in this attachment to the social pacts, the social bribes that gave way to the state founded in 1952 and that define its entire attitude toward the state. In spite of the deaths, persecutions, exiles and the radicalism of its speeches, at root the COB, whose collective subjects are fused as a union-confederation on the national scale, never ever – unless we include the intense rage of exceptional moments such as April 1952 or July 1980 – questioned the governing and ruling function of the learned élites who, to this day, have inherited the technologies of political and economic power through an inbred patronage-system. Despite the bloodletting, the COB always saw in the state an institution from which to ask, request or demand, because it always considered itself as a subject under the command of others and considered its struggles as the ritual of an economy of rights and concessions negotiated in the streets, but never questioned fundamentally.

its little party-lackeys, constitutes, without doubt, the substance from which to mould 'accumulation within the class' (as Zavaleta put it). However, today it is vanishing – paradoxically, under the overbearing initiative of capital itself. This is because the latter no longer needs nor seeks out social pacts in order to distribute the now-diminished social surplus.

In the second place, and again in contrast to what happened with the Revolution of 1848, the general crisis today does not rest on an ascendant form of the proletarianisation of society, as in the 1840s, but rather on the dismantling of the present such form and the project to erect a new one. The contemporary economic crisis does not rely on sectors of labour indispensable to the programme of capital-development, as in the nineteenth century (the manufacturing textile-industry, iron-production, crafts-production) but on the dismantling and downgrading of those branches of production that previously had the greatest importance to the proletariat and highest level of workers' organisation (cars, engineering, coal, petroleum, and so on) and on giving privileged impulse to new branches of industry built on the backs of a *new* proletariat, one that is disorganised, lacking in associative experience, and caught up in fierce internal competition (basic electronics, telecommunications, the aerospace-industry, and so on).

The historically ascendant proletariat, indispensable to taking forward projects for the reorganisation of capital, is neither the proletariat such as it was organised before today, nor – and this is its particular trait – a proletariat installed in the traditional branches of the previous expansion of capital.

The first aspect, in fact, explains the corporate meaning of any crisis: the quest to erode and crush the modes of self-organisation and dangerous forms of resistance against capital, and, therefore, the need for the techno-organisational restructuring of the modalities in which the old productive activities were carried out. This has been happening since the 1970s, with so-called 'post-Fordism', diffuse industrialisation, and other innovative modalities of production-management on a global scale.

The second aspect, by contrast, goes well beyond the simple modification of the internal structure of labour-processes in the old branches of industry. It does presuppose the latter, but, above all, it modifies the very material and historical basis of social proletarianisation. It does this by restructuring the functioning of the global economy, local economies, branches of industry and the structural position of the proletariat, as well as its internal gradations, starting with the expansive rolling out, in terms of technological leadership and economic domination, of branches of work and forms of the consumption of labour-power different from those that existed up until now.

Not only do we find ourselves faced with a reorganisation of the proletariat's working conditions, but we also see, emerging before our own eyes, a new type

of proletariat, a new linkage of labour-activities worldwide; that is, a new form of relations among workers on a planetary scale, transforming those that were previously set out. With this, we are witnessing a different way of linking the activities formally subsumed under world-capital with the economic (productive, circulatory and financial) branches really subsumed under capital.

The material structure of labour and capital is being reconfigured before our own eyes, and, together with this, the material structure of the constitution of labour itself, of wage-labour, and of the working class. All this, which we must call a new type in the historical and material formation of social proletarianisation, is what conspires so that the crisis may present itself cloaked in the political stupor of work, listlessness, and an endless chain no longer of interconnections, but of fragmentations. These drag in their wake just a handful of interconnections of labour that, from time to time, emerge here or there. To understand the renewed ways of constituting social classes in contemporary society, as well as their historical fissures and fusions, is, indeed, another area where the *Communist Manifesto* continues to show just how relevant it is today.

3. Who are the bourgeois and proletarians? Class-struggles and social classes as structural movement

a) *Bourgeois and proletarians*

'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles'.⁵⁵ With this striking sentence, Marx opens the first chapter of the *Manifesto*. The aim is clear: it is a matter of showing that the social differences and antagonisms that arise in actuality do not pertain exclusively to the time in which the *Manifesto* was written, but, in different modalities and varying degrees of intensity, they have existed during other historical moments, and we will find them again in whatever slice of capitalist society we choose to pick out.

With regard to the class-struggle in societies prior to capitalism, in a note from 1888, Engels explained that these social divisions stemmed from the disintegration of primitive forms of communal organisation, whose existence was almost unknown in 1848.⁵⁶

In actual fact, there exists a large bibliography in which Marx, after the composition of the *Communist Manifesto*, studied the agrarian communal structures

55. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 219.

56. Ibid. In *The German Ideology*, turning to the division of labour, these authors developed a first attempt at defining various forms of property from antiquity (tribal, ancient, and feudal forms) to the present.

in different parts of the world,⁵⁷ as well as an equally copious discussion on the same topic, in addition to ethno-historical studies⁵⁸ about communal realities in the era of capitalism's worldwide expansion.

However, we should make two important clarifications on this subject. One is the study of archaic communal productive forms,⁵⁹ where the relations of social power do not take the shape of divergent poles, each with its own rules of regeneration; and the other is the study of archaic communal forms, modified as agricultural communities,⁶⁰ but inscribed in a wider context of the fluctuations of contradictory social forces clearly condensed in structures that perpetuate their defined differences. The first corresponds to an extremely remote period, one that is still understudied, given the difficulties implied in uprooting the innumerable obstacles of history that one needs to get through in order to reach such periods. The second, on the other hand, corresponds to the presence of communal structures that, on the one hand, define themselves in the face of a *great society* configured as a despotic state, colonial state, or capitalist state, and, on the other hand, demonstrate internal social stratifications intensified by the extortions of the larger societies that dominate them.

In this second case, which is the one that corresponds to our reality, it means that, in the face of the dominant social grouping, the members of the community defend themselves as a class, since, in terms of their living conditions, consistent economic ties, and cultural and political attitudes, their field of possibilities – beyond being different from the field of material possibilities defined by that of the holders of the prevailing state-power, of the dominant economic activity and legitimate culture – is found in relations of subordination, of subjection to them. The members of one community, whatever its form, by virtue of their ineluctable ties in the face of greater and more dominant social structures, are, as such, a social class; and all means of carrying forward or challenging these ties with respect to the economically, politically, and culturally dominant community, will do no more than consecrate this, their class-status.

That these members of a community are not a 'traditional' class of modern society does not deny their historical existence. Only dogmatic readers would try to force them into the 'classes' predetermined by the 'holy texts'.⁶¹ Against this vulgar idealism, which attempts to explain History by adapting it to a prior

57. Marx 1973a, pp. 471–9; Marx 1968b; Marx 1974; Marx 1975b; Engels 1926.

58. Krader 1963; Chayanov 1991; Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1966; Harris 1968; Murra 1980; Sahlins 1972.

59. Marx 1974; 1975b.

60. Marx 1973a, pp. 471–9; 1974; 1975b.

61. One should take into account, here, the convoluted classification that pseudo-leftist theoreticians have attempted, over the decades, with the goal of turning communal peasants into individual small farmers or petty-bourgeois, turning *mitayos* and sharecroppers into slaves, and so on.

concept, Marx's task was to reclaim History as the place from which the concept arises, as a way of making it intelligible.⁶² And if it is true that Marx does not talk about community in the *Manifesto*, that is not because it does not exist, but rather, as Engels clarifies, because at that time it was unknown, owing to an absence of studies on the topic.

When, in the 1850s, Marx submerged himself in more thorough research, in order to understand the emergence and function of money, he revised his bibliography on non-mercantile societies, working on this in his first draft of *Capital* (the *Grundrisse*).⁶³ Moreover, when Marx embarked on studying how it is that capitalist rationality advances through the subordination of the world to the social-productive form of value (the beginning of primitive accumulation, in many regions of the world), he saw the importance of the existing social structures in the 'extremities of the capitalist body' as a form of resistance and revolutionary potentialities. This would be an element cutting across all his thought, leading him to create new categories giving an account of this exuberant social reality.⁶⁴

In *Capital*, we find a more precise and complete conceptualisation, contemporary with capitalist relations and communal forms transformed by but also subjected to capital – as has appeared, since the middle of the nineteenth century, throughout the entire world – under the categories of 'formal and real subsumption of the modes of production, circulation and consumption of capital'.⁶⁵ Indeed, Marx embarked upon a more rigorous categorisation of a certain type of contemporary colonialism, starting not from the mercantile subordination of the process of immediate labour – which assumes, already, a certain mercantile homogenisation of society's culture and labour-relations – but rather from the general subsumption of the modes of production and social circulation by commercial capital,⁶⁶ which supposes that the process of (communal or small-peasant) immediate labour has some non-mercantile quality, but without any increasing integration of the sphere of local consumption and circulation into the mercantile circuit. In this case, we would then say that this kind of colonialism is, above all, more than a cultural reality, a reproductive reality; namely, one based on the level of structuring of the conditions of social-natural reproduction in a delimited social space. The character of colonialism in general – and of

62. Marx 1973a, pp. 81–111. See also Marx 1989c.

63. Ibid.

64. See, for example, the concepts of the 'Asiatic commune', 'German commune', and so on, appearing in the *Grundrisse*. Later, with more ethnographic information, this gave rise, in his draft-letters to Vera Zasulich, to his concepts of 'archaic communal forms', 'agrarian communes', and their various other forms.

65. Marx 1976a, Chapters Seven and Twenty-Two. See also Chapter Six (unpublished).

66. Marx 1981.

'internal colonialism'⁶⁷ in particular – is thus given initially by the formal subjugation of the social relations of communal structures to capital; and, because of this, simultaneously, by the constitution of members of the communal entity as a class with respect to the social classes that configure the external capitalist reality surrounding them. The problems of forming a class-identity, which, in this space, is an intercommunal or supracommunal identity, are similar to the rest of the subaltern classes in terms of exceeding the social fragmentation that is promoted, here, not only by the external domination of capital, but also by the local communal identities rooted in family-relationships (blood-relationships and rituals). Nonetheless, collective action, even if initially only at a local level, is itself fostered by these same community-practices, which presuppose productive and cultural practices undertaken in common as the procedural basis of its own historical identity.

But not only is it the case that the external social context (relations of power) dominating contemporary communal structures define the members of the community as a part of a social class, but rather that the internal relations among the members of the community, under these conditions, tend to give shape to classes constituted within the community itself. We are referring, for example, to the so-called 'originary authorities',⁶⁸ the hereditary lineages where legitimate communal authority is deposited; to the women who face living conditions clearly different from those of men; or to the communal peasants who make incursions into urban mercantile activities, like selling their labour-power, the increasing sale of products, participation in trading activities, and so on. These 'various orders' or this 'manifold gradation of social rank' – as Marx begins to define classes – within their own community complicate the particularities of the communal class, for they show various classes starting to form, beginning with the slow disintegration of the community. The formation of a (semi-proletarian) poor-peasant class, a middle-class, and a rich peasantry,⁶⁹ is the most likely (though not inevitable) route of this disintegration of the communal structure, a process that can last for decades or centuries, as in the case of Bolivia. When this process of class-formation is complete, the agrarian community is finished. Meanwhile, where communal social forms do exist, the communal class subdivides into various sub-classes that combine in a hybrid way and strain this, its communal root, with the aggregation of peasants and merchants.

However, the members of the community that have not yet been subjected to processes of radical and irreversible social stratification do not form part of

67. Stavenhagen 1975.

68. Platt 1988; Murra 1975; Zuidema and Burga 1989; Spalding 2005; Rasnake 1989.

69. Engels 1990a; 1990b; Kautsky 1988; Lenin 1956; Tse-Tung 1956; 1953.

either a bourgeois class or a proletarian class, nor the petty bourgeoisie. This is the case insofar as, in the community, neither are the means of labour private property, in the sense of a commodity,⁷⁰ nor is labour concentrated as a commodity; nor, much less, does its incorporation into the labour-process serve to valorise value, and nor does there exist a direct submission of the worker to the means of labour.

In communal forms, the means of labour are *individual property* or common assets of the domestic units (cultivated land), whether separate or shared (pastureland); labour-power is aggregated by means of the activation of kinship-circuits and of mutual, non-simultaneous effort, insofar as the tools remain under the procedural sovereignty of the direct producers, much like, at the same time, the few or many communal techniques of labour necessary for communal reproduction.

What is the historical destiny of this 'communal class'? It will depend on the aleatory course of the history of the class-struggle, in the face of which the prescription of an obligatory route is nothing more than the stupidity of decadent prophets or the outburst of a philosophy of history whose defect 'consists in being supra-historical'.⁷¹ The community is not condemned to disappear, though this is its most likely path; it could also be the point of departure of a general renovation of society, insofar as modern society also tends, as we have seen, as a counter-finality to its progress, towards superior and universalised forms of communal life. This *possibility* will be signalled by the presence, on a national scale, of the agrarian community, contemporary with the acquisitions of social work created and repressed by capital. In fact, in countries like those of Latin America, at this stage, the possibility of an authentic insurgency against the domination of capital is unthinkable outside the communal class and its struggle to universalise the communal social rationality that characterises it.⁷²

70. Meillassoux 1977.

71. Marx 1989c, p. 201.

72. 'Free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and on their subordination of their communal, social productivity as their social wealth, is the third stage . . . Social production is not subsumed under individuals, manageable by them as their common wealth. [It is a] free exchange among individuals who are associated on the basis of common appropriation and control of the means of production': Marx 1973a, pp. 158–9. In the Siglo XXI Spanish translation, the words *gemeinschaftlich* and *gemeinsam* which correspond to 'communally' and 'communitarian', have been translated as 'collective' and 'common', meanings that obscure the clear distinction that Marx makes between *Gesellschaft* (society based on abstract ties) and *Gemeinschaft* (community based on productive and direct ties). Similarly, in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels speak of communism as 'the community of revolutionary proletarians . . . who take their conditions of existence and those of all members of society under their control': Marx and Engels 1975a, p. 80.

It should be clear, then, that the juridical definitions of class so typical of manuals and pamphlets are a real epistemological barrier to understanding non-capitalist forms of social stratification. Moreover, the very complexity proper to the defining classes of capitalist systems are impossible to understand by means of the pettifogging or technical characterisations attributed to Marxism.

A first attempt at a notion of class would be to say that it is defined 'by the position that the owners of the means of production maintain' in a given society at a given moment, in particular, based on the 'property' that these classes own, or the lack thereof. Now, what does it mean to say that 'classes' are established by property over the means of production, or the lack thereof? That classes are consequences of specific economic relations; or worse, that classes are a by-product of property-relations, an understanding of classes thus being reduced to a matter of local legalities, posed, like 'impartial discourse', over and above social conflicts, arbitrating between them in an unbiased fashion. It is not unusual for this kind of 'definitions' to be incubated in the schools that train up government-employees and state-bureaucrats.

Laws, civil codes, forms of property, in spite of their guardians and worshippers, do not precede the conflictual configuration of society: they are its written validation, the crystallised synthesis of collective ambitions and impositions fought over in the world of wealth. Property, in any of its categories, operates as much as a form of suppression of other forms of property, as a way of excluding potential property-owners: it is the legitimisation of a power of control and of a power of use by certain members of the collectivity, and the institutionalisation of other members' defencelessness against these powers.

Property, in any of its forms and from its beginning, is the establishment of an unspeakable social antagonism, operating by means of control and power over the existing means of life, and the ambition that this should exist in perpetuity. Property over something is not only a relation between a person and an object; it is the spatial location of the sordid warring between people, at the same time as itself being social belligerence in motion. In light of this, legal property-rights should be seen as a hypocritical effect at apologetics for class (-struggle).

What we can ascribe formally to this or that social relation, by way of the pertinence or choice of this or that legal propriety over this or that means of production, should not make us forget the social task or programme that is the object of property, independent of and prior to the property-owner. Nor, on the other hand, should we forget the combination of practices and intentions that the property-owner is compelled to advance in order to validate the meaning of 'his property'. Property by itself establishes an abstract sovereignty over the object of this property; the reality of property is the mode of exercising this sovereignty and defending it against those from whom it is claimed; that is, the social divisions and hierarchies that precede and explain it.

When people attempt to explain social classes by way of property-relations, in reality what is happening is that they have inverted and mystified the problem of classes, taking for the starting point that which is, in a strict sense, the outcome, a radical criticism of social divisions of classes thus being replaced with a legal criticism of forms of property. If property holds one truth about classes, it is that it is a moment of their antagonistic movement at a given historical moment.

This way of seeing things has a certain ahistorical aura to it. It is as if people, means of production and diverse 'relations' (or combinations, as some prefer to call them), exist independent of one another, their periodically different mixing structuring the various social classes. What is unacceptable about this is that it turns the analytical dissection of theoretical reality into the group-representation of that reality. The means of production, even in their physical corporeality, are nothing more than a way of linking people among themselves and with nature by means of things; as such, it is not only the mode of use, but the meaning of use and the material certainty of use, that a programme of social intentionalities and confrontations embodies.

People, for their part, are the most complete living social substance; from birth, they carry as a meaning of their existence the missions of the era of the society that harboured them; as such, it does not make any sense to refer to an original time in which people innocently took part in the so-called means of production, from which greater or lesser modalities of social divisions came about. People and the occurrence of things, of objects, are conflictual and confrontational in their incessant movement; they have been born from antagonisms, they are themselves antagonisms in a state of flux, and their future owes to this confrontation, either overcoming these antagonisms with others or else perpetuating them. People and things have a social existence, with and because of the wretched mark of these sordid social battles and offensives, for which reason it makes no sense to talk about people that precede classes or antagonisms. These three moments are moments of one and the same reality.

What would be, then, the notion of class adequate to allowing us to account for the complexity of the contemporary social structure, including communal forms formally subsumed by capital? Let us examine those proposed by Marx in the *Manifesto*.

When he speaks of the bourgeoisie, he does not define it in legal terms of property,⁷³ but rather in terms of the movement of political and cultural history,

73. In our view, Engels, in his 1888 clarifying note, simplifies the concept of social classes, a simplification on the basis of which various later reductionist interpretations would emerge. Nonetheless, even in this 'Engelsian' simplification, the definition of the bourgeoisie as a social class refers not only to property, but also to the employment of wage-labour. As for the proletariat, besides its lack of ownership of the means of production, he refers to its having to sell its labour-power as the only available means of subsisting as workers and human-beings.

as productive activity, that acquires certain intentions, that takes certain positions with respect to the conditions of the material reality of those economic, political, and cultural practices. Either as free citizens organised in a guild, as a 'medium industrial strata', or as 'modern industrialists' – personifying different moments of European bourgeois development – its 'class-ification' derives from productive processes, on three levels of social reality, that structure the concept of the bourgeoisie:

a) At the economic level: initially, as urban guild-production supplying commodities.⁷⁴ Subsequently, as the flow of exchange, in the form of commodities, awakened by the opening of markets in China, India and the American colonies;⁷⁵ labour also became a commodity. Still later, as a division of labour within the workshop, instead of a division of labour between guilds;⁷⁶ this was the beginning of industrial despotism, which began to discipline labour as alienated labour.⁷⁷ Then, the technological revolution took hold of the technical reality of production, allowing for the properly industrial expansion of capital across the rest of the world, the concentration of property and the development of the world-market;⁷⁸ but, simultaneously, it converted the worker into an appendage of the machine.⁷⁹ Thus, a double subsumption: on the one hand, that of world-labour to capital through the generalisation of capitalist production to the rest of the world's countries, interconnected by a world-market that preceded them and now appears as one more product of industrialisation; and, on the other hand, the technological subordination of labour within production itself.

b) At the political level: from being an oppressed class, to its autonomous fight for its own interests in the face of the old ruling classes, up to the achievement of 'conquer[ing] for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway'.⁸⁰ Simultaneously – or, rather, in order to form that hegemony – a process of political centralisation, in the form of upholding national interests.⁸¹ This is a process by which, on the one hand, it drags the proletarians under its banner, and, on the other hand, it faces up to the bourgeoisie of the other countries in order to preserve its monopoly over the hegemonised social territory; and lastly, it breaks the resistance of those fractions of the bourgeoisie that come into contradiction with 'the progress of industry'.⁸² The assumption underlying this

74. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 220.

75. Ibid.

76. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 220–1.

77. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 226–7.

78. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 220–7.

79. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 227.

80. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 221.

81. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 223.

82. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 230.

process is its capacity constantly to fragment other forms of political organisation in society, especially those of the proletariat,⁸³ because only through such disintegration can their strategies of collective articulation around exchange-value and industrial development prove themselves.

c) At the cultural level: an erosion of servile bonds and representations, social religions that are no longer guided by the 'naked self-interest' of profit; 'It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value'.⁸⁴ 'Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly'.⁸⁵ Incorporation of commodity-logic into the very behaviour of labour and its horizons of action; 'a more or less hidden civil war', both incessant and daily, not only in order to turn the worker into a wage-worker, a political-economic fact, but also to make the worker understand himself as a wage-worker, as an owner of goods who establishes social ties with others (workers and bourgeois) as private owners.

Each one of these levels simultaneously presupposes the others, and though the cultural-political can play a more active role in certain given conjunctures, these acquire a technical and organisational materiality when they are crystallised as transformation through the reorganisation of production in modern society. Today, the bourgeoisie is that social group which, on a planetary and local scale, personifies this expansion-*movement* of the relations of production and exchange as relations subordinated to exchange-value; that group which, owing to its position controlling the conditions of economic, political, and cultural production and invention, subordinates alienated labour in order to make it, in an increasingly technologically-developed way, a source of the valorisation of value. The bourgeoisie, therefore, is the personification of a movement and a social position that are defined against and in conflict with other movements and social positions; the bourgeoisie, and later also the proletariat, are social subjects that exist in relations of struggle, of appropriation, of self-defence, of domination, of resistance in the material domain that configures the conditions of the production, reproduction and invention of economic-political-cultural life. The concept of struggle precedes that of classes; better, because there are struggles between social subjects, then there are social classes; as such, it is not by chance that in the *Manifesto*, Marx speaks first of class-struggle and only then of the classes that are formed out of the struggle.

83. Ibid.

84. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 222.

85. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 243.

It should be clear, then, that legal property⁸⁶ is merely a partial aspect of this social relation. What happens with limited companies, in which it legally appears as if the workers themselves ‘are owners’; with the property of the state, where ‘the whole town is the owner’; or with home-based labour, in which the worker is apparently an ‘entrepreneur’; clearly demonstrates the extreme superficiality and fetishisation on the basis of which legal ideology operates, for it is only capable of accounting for the purple rash on the skin, not the tumultuous bodily flux of forces and positions that make up the reality of social relations – in this case, capital.

As for the modern liberal fable that attempts to assert, in the wake of the ‘democratisation of property’, the extinction of class-differences, leftist legalism falls on bended knee, impotent before its impostures, since it shares a common starting-point. Uncovering, beneath the crust of laws, codes, and mystifications, the raging social relations that structure classes, allows us, in turn, to see that behind this ‘democratisation of property’⁸⁷ there lie brutal processes of *proletarianisation*, euphemistically covered with the legal rhetoric that ‘the people’ is turning into ‘the businesspeople’. Behind the worker-turned-atomised-shareholder stands a massive expropriation of the savings and benefits accumulated over decades, which fall into the hands of the biggest investors who, on top of everything else, symbolically coerce their workers into producing more labour-efficiency for ‘their business’. Behind the property of ‘all’ (of the state) is crouched the power of a state-bourgeoisie with the opportunity to privately dispose of part of the social surplus, even doing so in the name of the ‘country’, the ‘nation’, or ‘the revolution’. Lastly, behind these ‘businesspeople’ selling services – who can be anything from seamstresses, street-food sellers, office-cleaners, consultants, researchers – lie home-based or itinerant workers who sell their labour-power in the form of products (a piecework-salary), and whose labour-power, together with that of an immense, scattered army of workers, directly or indirectly helps valorise the capitalist processes of centralisation. This happens either by way of the reduction of the value of the formally non-waged labour-power that consumes the products of these ‘self-employed’ people; by way of reducing the costs of production for large companies, as in the case of guilds; or by way of the development of material or immaterial products that form part of the mechanism of

86. From Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, through the *Communist Manifesto*, right until the end of his work, his concept of property was not restricted to the present legal meaning, but rather covered, above all else, the fundamental social attribute incorporated into the objects themselves. Marx calls this meaning of property – which ‘is not its legal expression’, but ‘its real form’ – ‘relations of production’: Marx 1987b, p. 64.

87. De Soto 1986. See also De Soto 1989.

functioning of large companies and the labour-power absorbed in order to valorise capital.⁸⁸ Marx calls these forms of the *wage-earning-isation* of labour-power ‘forms in transition’, forms that speak of a labour-power ‘subsumed formally in capital’,⁸⁹ but which are now reactualised as modes of the development of capital-accumulation in productive sectors really subsumed into capital.

In any case, what is decisive about all this is that the bourgeois class is not a property-deed, but rather a collection of mechanisms and social dispositions in flux, spread amongst the different spaces of material life (economic-political-cultural) and configuring identities and realms of behaviour. This is possible on the basis of the mass of interdependent power-relations spreading out across these spaces, which hinge on the power and possession of the material conditions of production within them. Social classes are, then, the poles of this igneous social antagonism, born and, ultimately, reproduced technically; starting from the process of the production of material wealth, then covering and embracing all of the processes of social reproduction.

Now, insofar as value and labour (or, if you prefer, capital and labour, for capital is value that self-reproduces), are no more than the becoming, the historical playing-out of one same social substance – labour as the creative energy of humanity and labour as its alienation (capital) – the poles of social antagonism, i.e. classes, should be treated as power-relations antagonised through the control, use, generalisation and enjoyment of this productive energy of social materiality. These are power-relations that reside in all of people’s actions and fields of action, in which they acquire social reality as multiple, relatively integrated forms of the existence of human labour-power, of its creative activity in its most diverse sense, and of multiple relatively integrated forms of the antithesis of that potential. Put another way, we have to understand class-struggle, and then classes, as a constant process of the development of spaces for social activity (group or individual), beginning with the process of production, of alienating and disalienating labour-power, of seizing the creative capacity of man and turning against its bearers, and of resisting, of winning back control, of expanding this creative capacity unlimitedly on behalf of those who daily give it up. Each of them starts over again at each moment, in each deed, of human creativity.

As such, we must see the classes in capitalism (but also any other societal organisation of the process of the production and reproduction of material life that is founded on the social antagonism between forms of living labour and their alienation) as a condensation of forces, of intentions, of behaviours, of wills,

88. On the concept of material and immaterial products, see Marx 1968a.

89. See Marx 1994, pp. 121–46.

of practices, of representations, of enjoyments; of events directed to spreading the power of labour-in-action, of living labour in its different specialties and components (beginning, of course, from the process of the production of the material goods that sustain life, but also and principally covering other forms of social wealth like pleasure, politics, imagination, health, education, sacrifice, coexistence, leisure, contemplation, consumption, procreation, all that is human creativity in its state of realisation); and subject it to the process of the valorisation of capital.

Capital, for Marx, 'is not personal power; it is a social power'; therefore, 'to be a capitalist, is to have not only a purely personal, but a social *status* in production';⁹⁰ the capitalist in himself is 'a mere function of capital'.⁹¹

The definition of class in the *Manifesto* is procedural, not static, legal, or technical. Capital is a social relation, not a group of people with certain peculiar qualities. The importance of this *categorical* manner of expressing modern social relations lies in the fact that it allows us to go beyond the bureaucratic-legal notions that have marked our political experience for the last seventy years. In these conceptions, the bourgeoisie and its power are a problem of the property owned by this or that person, and the defeat of the bourgeoisie takes place through state-expropriation of that property and the physical extermination or exile of the property-owners: that is, through administrative measures.

The experience of the ex-USSR demonstrates that state-property of the means of production defended by state-bureaucrats and minor sects that aspire to be governmental officials simply establishes the state as a 'capitalist collective'⁹² and the members of the party as new subjects bearing the bourgeoisie's social function, through which the social relation of capital is reproduced, albeit in a different way.

Going beyond capital, from the perspective of Marx's definition, means going beyond the social power-relations, behaviours, dispositions, and positionings of those in control, the utilisation and transformation of the conditions of the production of necessary materials (the economy), of sovereignty (politics), and of

90. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 236.

91. Marx 1976a, p. 739.

92. 'But, the transformation – either into joint-stock companies and trusts, or into State-ownership – does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces. In the joint-stock companies and trusts, this is obvious. And the modern State, again, is only the organization that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine – the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers – proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is, rather, brought to a head': Engels 1989, p. 319.

symbolic goods (culture). And this, of course, is not an attribute of some shepherd (Foucault)⁹³ or state-bureaucrat crouched behind some self-proclaimed 'vanguard': it is a social movement, revolutionising social relations. The subjects of such transformations cannot be any other than the subjects that suffer from these relations: labour in all its corporealised forms, which, in modern society, is principally (but not exclusively) the proletariat.

Capital as a social relation and the bourgeoisie as a social position, so explicitly defined in the *Manifesto*, lay the foundations for the possibility of going beyond capitalism, through the self-emancipation movement of the modern working class, the proletariat. This is because it is precisely its own attitudes, efforts, dispositions, tolerances and efforts that create and sustain – as a product *alienated* from itself – capital, and the personifiers of that social relation, the bourgeoisie. The social revolution is not, then, a surprise-attack that eliminates bourgeois families – or, much less, an administrative measure in which some little chief dictates a decree of 'socialisation' – but rather a practical, historical, long-term movement in which, even long before the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie, labour cracks and erodes the power-relations in economics, politics, culture, and technology that maintain capital. Moreover, it is an economic-political-cultural process in which labour creates new dispositions, new attitudes and new capacities, in order to turn to its own advantage the control and management of the material conditions of economic, political, and cultural production. This revolutionary process is a decades-long historical process that begins well before the open, nationwide struggle to secure a monopoly of physical and symbolic state-violence (to use Bourdieu's terms).⁹⁴ It is a hard-fought fight that, when it comes, and if it is not to become another impulse for the reproduction of capitalism, should develop as a concentrated, explosive accumulation of multiple prior experiences of autonomy and social self-management, which prepare the proletariat to take responsibility for society's fate into its own collective hands.⁹⁵ The revolution, once it has won, should then continue spreading itself through other more favourable and centralised means (socialism).

The social possibility of this process, its becoming, is the process of the *construction* of the proletarian class.

93. Foucault 2000.

94. Bourdieu 1998.

95. Marx and Engels 2002. In the same sense, Marx states: 'A national German approach has replaced the universal conception of the *Manifesto*, flattering the national sentiments of German artisans. The *will*, rather than the actual conditions, was stressed as the chief factor in the revolution. We tell the workers: If you want to change conditions and make yourselves capable of government, you will have to undergo fifteen, twenty, or fifty years of civil war. Now they are told: We must come to power immediately or we might as well go to sleep': see Marx 1973b, p. 341.

b) *The determination of labour by capital: the commodification of labour-power. Who are today's proletarians?*

First: *'the modern working class... who live only so long as they find work'; that is, workers who cannot live off what they produce, and must make their creative potential (labour) available to others.*

Here, then, we are faced with workers who no longer participate in the structures of self-sufficiency (community, the domestic unit), whereby the means by which these workers and their families live directly result from their labour, without the mediation of exchange. Now, the workers are defined by their work not being directed towards satisfying their own needs, but rather satisfying external requirements, their work being useful to *someone else*. To use the terms of the first chapter of *Capital*, it has to do with a worker whose capacity, labour, has become 'social use value',⁹⁶ a use-value-for-itself and, therefore, no longer a simple use-value-in-itself. There is, here, a first sign of the universality of the modern worker, insofar as his labour, in order to become effective labour, must have social utility, must be consumed by others that are not its producers. This worker is defined by his or her ties to the world, to exterior needs whose maximum-limit is the world's needs. In the capitalist system, the capacity for labour reaches – though in an abstract and repressed way – the discovery of a communitarian potential that comprises all human beings.

Nonetheless, this universality of the use-value of a modern worker's labour does not exist out in the open; it does so under the control of the relations of value, as a subjugation of use-value to exchange-value, that is, as a form of commerce;⁹⁷ the universality of these capacities thus appears as an out-and-out pretext for private profit-interests, for business-earnings.

Second: *'These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce'*.⁹⁸

The capacity of labour, insofar as it is defined as existing for others, the social use-value of labour, cannot realise itself openly in its generic and communitarian reality: it is constrained – or better, dominated, twisted, and hidden – by exchange-value, by means of a quantifiable and abstract measurement, proper to it, that appears as its visible counterpart, but castrates its constitutive utilities; even worse, as a counterpart that, much like a concave mirror, deforms the

96. Marx 1976a, p. 131. See also Chapter Seven (pp. 283–306) and Twenty-Two (pp. 701–6).

97. Marx 1976a, p. 131; Echeverría 1989.

98. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 227.

reality of the use-value of labour and makes it see itself, understand itself, as a mere coagulation of exchange-value, like the other goods that inhabit the world of exchange and are realised when they are exchanged for other goods.

This second characteristic of the proletariat is demonstrated in the form of a worker that realises his or her creative capacity, labour, as a commodity, as a good exchangeable on the market and subject to its laws of exchange. But much as the workers' capacity is their labour-power, indissoluble from their corporeal being, insofar as it is not materialised and deployed in their objectified labour (exploited labour), what becomes a commodity is not the workers' corporeality itself – which would be slavery – but rather their labour-power mediated through time. This supposes two things: the workers' sovereignty over their own labour-power, since otherwise they could not come to market in possession of a sellable good like their counterparts (the buyers of labour-power); and, simultaneously, the quantification of this labour-power as a commodity, its measurement in time according to its equivalence with other concurrent labour-powers, which regulate – unconsciously, and in a complex series of approximations – an average-measure of the exchange-value of labour-power, a social value of labour-power.⁹⁹

That labour becomes wage-labour or – what is the same thing – that the capacity for labour appears as a commodity, is, therefore, a process of imposing parameters on labour, of the domestication of its potentialities, of the mutilation of its transcendent contents, with the goal of turning it into a vulgar commodity and its bearer into a merchant. Having become a merchant, the worker must 'sell himself piecemeal': he must hand himself over to others in exchange for some amount of value, because today that is the only way in which his work can become useful and its usefulness reproduced. This last idea is decisive for understanding the many forms of contemporary proletarianisation.

The first condition of proletarianisation is that labour should be useful for others besides its producer, giving worker's labour, as the material content of wealth (use-value), its universal character. But for this universality to show itself, it must take the form of a quantifiable 'phantom-like objectivity':¹⁰⁰ value. This is the second condition, rebounding upon and dominating the first. Only through this social measure, and the magnitude of that measure (exchange-value), does the utility-in-itself of the worker's labour appear as a specifically social utility. Although this may look like a simple logic, nevertheless, it presupposes the walling-in of its material existence, demanding:

99. Marx 1976a; Rubin 1996.

100. Marx 1976a, p. 128; Derrida 2004.

a) that the worker lose effective sovereignty over the future of his or her labour. The first moment of this alienation is that the worker produces something not as a generous display of his or her own capacities, but rather as a submission to external necessities, which set the terms of useful work over and against the worker's own inclination. This is the home-based worker, the ancient and modern artisanal worker, and a certain type of self-employed worker derived from this. The second moment of alienation comes when the objectification of material and technical labour presents itself as non-property, as a foreign and opposite objectivity. This is the worker concentrated and organised by industry;

b) that the expenditure of labour-power can be considered in an abstract form, exchangeable for a sum of value, the equivalent of the means of consumption necessary to replace the effort deployed. The first is the condition for the second, for even in the capitalist system, labour-power is comparable only with itself in terms of magnitude and competence (reciprocal acts of help over time, communal structures) or with the use and possession of certain goods (land, the harvest). When concrete labour can be measured according to an undifferentiated sum of general labour, this allows for the concrete labour of the worker to be subordinated to the abstract labour that can quantify it according to the median social labour that the making of the product by other people would require. Quantifying this labour-power according to the median social labour-power required for the creation of the products that the worker produces should allow, at the same time, for a quantification of the social value of labour-power, whereby the worker who produces goods appears, rather, as his or her labour-power, as one more commodity. This completes the circle of abstract sociality, which initially emerged as a way of measuring labour-activity, but now appears as a strange force that dominates, guides and defines it: now we are faced with the full alienation of labour in movement;

c) that the utility of the products of labour comes about only and solely insofar as it generates surplus-value upon one of the ladders of the economic organisation of the society where the results of labour are realised. When valorisation is directly expropriated by the owner and controller of the means of production that uses the worker, we have the characteristic business-organisation of capitalism.

When valorisation is realised for the contractor that controls neither the use nor the partial ownership of the means of labour, what we have before us are the various forms of home-based labour, both ancient and modern. When valorisation, for its realisation, must still pass through various ladders of mediation, we have the artisan, the mercantilised peasant, the self-employed worker or the vendor whose labour, consumed by sectors of popular consumption, reduces the value of the social labour-power available to the business-owner, or indirectly

reduces the costs of the realisation of productive and commercial capital. This will give shape to forms of *hybrid-proletarianisation*, in which home-based, workshop, and communal competences, and inventive and associative non-capitalist productive forces in general, instead of being dissolved, are refunctionalised to valorise capital. *These modes of formal subsumption, combined with the real subsumption of processes of social production and invention by capital, are characteristic of the beginnings of the capitalist system, but also, in recent decades, have been used by neoliberal strategies in order to help construct the new wave of expansion of capital-accumulation.*

d) In all cases, whether directly or indirectly, labour must behave not only as a use-value that can be exchanged for a sum of value, but also as the source of value whose consumption, in general terms, explicitly has the role of generating more value for social capital than what it pays for, and expropriating this value for itself.

This valorisation of capital can happen at an individual level, as in the case of waged workers working for a business, or at the group-level of society, as in the case of peasant, artisan, family or self-employed labour; those who, without valorising one particular business-owner and without maintaining employment-contracts with any one bourgeois, turn their capacity for labour into a commodity and valorise social capital, insofar as they submerge themselves into commodity-relations (the buying and selling of temporary labour-power, the buying of industrial products, the selling of self-made products, the taking out of bank-loans, and so on).¹⁰¹ And since these motley extortionate forms of the consumption of labour-power require that labour's utility be under the general control of capital, labour, as commodified labour, is made to appear as part of capital, as one of its moments: as variable capital.¹⁰²

Labour-capacity as capital's variable capital is a structural definition of the modern worker, ordering not only the worker's economic function in society, but also his political and cultural function. Whether the worker is compelled to play the role of variable capital for a particular business (the wage-worker) or for social capital considered as a whole (the hybrid-worker subjected to variegated forms of the commodification of labour-power), his economic, political, and cultural practice are, from the outset, marked and dominated by the economic, political, and cultural practices of capital. From the beginning, and until the cyclical historical moments of his self-negation as a worker-of-capital, the worker is a creature of capital, the 'variable part'.

101. Marx 1963; Bartra 1979.

102. Marx 1976a, pp. 283–306.

In sum, the hierarchised fusion of these constitutive elements of social proletarianisation, including its internal variation, give space for the complex processes of the universalising proletarianisation of modern labour-power, as well as being our guiding thread in understanding the erosion of the agrarian community.

Whether workers subjected to these social relations sell their labour-power as an abstract substance to the business-owner, or else in the form of products or services, what we have, here, are multiple forms of the commodification of the consumption of labour-power:¹⁰³ formally-contracted industrial workers, agribusiness and mining; casual workers, part-time workers, subcontracted workers, and home-based workers; scientists at research-companies, individual analysts that sell their knowledge; construction-workers, salaried workers in businesses in the service-sector and in the transport-industry; salaried workers in communications, and individual producers of the means of information, banking, and trade; members of cooperatives that only use their own labour-power, microbusiness-workers concentrated under familial relations; peasants whose production is completely or primarily for the market; small individual shopkeepers who sell the commodities produced by capitalist businesses, producer-sellers of clothes and food in segmented markets of the working population itself; garbage-collectors, and so on, are so many different ways of commodifying labour-power, giving rise to a kaleidoscopic modern proletarianisation of labour-power.

The technical and productive changes in the last decades, far from deproletarianising the population, are carrying it to extreme and globalised levels; and this growing variety of strata, in fact, do nothing but further confirm the essential meaning of the worker's being: the worker's fragmentation, atomisation, pulverisation by and before capital, because what resides in the worker is precisely the possibility of an unlimited renewal of the conversion of labour into alienated labour, that is, of labour's use-value for capital.

Certainly, this fragmentation of the material structure of labour is a break from the image of the Fordist factory comprised of a homogenised army of workers, uniform and compact. That was a historical-temporal form of proletarianisation in decisive branches of the economy that are now being dissolved, such as to give

103. Marx 1968a. See also Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, pp. 107–12. Of the 3 billion working people registered as of 1995, 45.7 percent have a *waged job* allowing for their reproduction 'above the level of absolute poverty'; 27 percent are categorised as *self-employed* (this includes employers, self-employed workers, members of production-cooperatives, and home-based non-waged workers). These latter, in general, are not subjects of a labour-contract and, as such, want for social benefits or a stable income; 23 percent are *underemployed* (the UN defines these as 'poor workers', meaning that even though they work long hours, the majority does not receive a salary sufficient for climbing above the poverty-line, given their low level of productivity); and 4 percent find themselves in *open unemployment*.

way to more complex forms of proletarianisation, variegated and disconnected through subcontracting, the 'selling of services', and so on.

Many liberal ideologues have seen, in the extinction of the traditional worker, an argument for giving second place to workers – and, paradoxically, they find the chorus for their inventions in a certain pseudo-leftist discourse that yearns for the mass worker in the large company as the definitive, exclusive form of the composition of the working class. These precursors to Fukuyama, given their attachment to freezing transitional periods of capital as a 'last stage', have no belief (not even an argument, anymore) to wield in the face of liberal discourse other than that unemployed workers form part of the historical force of workers. This is true in part; but it fails to see that these unemployed workers and their families, next to the immense mass of workers that are not part of large industrial companies, and insofar as they are workers subjected to different modalities of subjugation by capital, are opening a space for new routes of the proletarianisation of labour-power and, with it, *new forms of socially constructing class*. This, of course, escapes the comprehension of the pastors of small sects and their book-learned conception of class, which, in the end, is shown to be useless.

The modern social worker must be found not only in the large factories with fixed-contract salaried workers; they are found in subcontracted businesses, in microbusinesses, in home-based work that revolves around a logic of valorisation defined by the former. They are found in construction, mining, transportation, the media, air-transportation, the production of services, in laboratories where new products are invented, in rubbish-dumps, and so on.

One could say that the world, bit by bit, is being turned into a giant factory where towns, communities, and workers, are thrown into a blender that attempts to convert everyone into a workforce for the valorisation of capital, into workers.¹⁰⁴ As such, the *Manifesto's* statement that 'all society is dividing itself, more and more, into two different enemy camps, into two different classes', has, in recent decades, been realised before our eyes with unprecedented force and on a planetary scale.

With all this, we should not forget that Marx is talking, here, about a growing tendency, about a historical impetus that points in this direction, not about a fact that has taken place. The persistence of communal structures, of forms of non-capitalist or precapitalist organisation and work, do not deny this global drive towards proletarianisation; rather, precisely what they show is that it is a

104. According to the International Labour Organisation, 'the world has become a huge bazaar with nations peddling their workforces in competition against one another, offering the lowest prices for doing business... Whether or not put so starkly, increasing economic competition that affects a growing number of workers across the world has been perceived as the most problematic implication of these developments [in global labour-markets]': ILO 1997, p. 4.

tendency that needs to overcome other forces that point toward different historical understandings, rather than an ineluctable law standing above history. From this point of view, the freezing and partial refunctionalising by capital of non-commodified labour-capacities speaks of the particular modalities – in this case, ambiguous ones – of the realisation and the transitory borders of this tendency. Moreover, the *Manifesto* not only speaks of a growing expansion of the proletarianised ‘field’ of the world-population: it speaks of a fragmented, contradictory field crossed by an infinite number of walls, which brutally divide the unity of the field of class and make it seem broken up. All contemporary ideologies concerning the extinction of the worker are the rhetorical representation of this transfiguration of the invisibilising material constitution of workers’ labour by and for capital. Hence:

Third: *‘These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market’.*¹⁰⁵

When human labour acquires the narrow social form of the commodity, not only does labour-power assume a historical value for capital (that of creating value) and an economic value for the personification of capital (the business-owner), but it also assumes an economic value for the owner of labour-power, namely the worker himself. Different from what happens in the world of commerce, labour-power is a commodity whose owner is the very corporeal bearer of this commodity, the worker. The vicissitudes of the market for the commodity ‘capacity for labour’; the competition it must win over in order to realise its successful sale; the bargaining that the owner must resort to, like any owner of commodities, to ensure that ‘someone’ will consume it – this is the competition, the bargaining between the owners of similar commodities, who are none other than the workers.

Labour-power as a commodity assumes, then, the confrontation between workers, the competition to best sell themselves to the boss, the miseries and servility in the face of the buyer in order to appeal more than the competition. Hence, the limitless strategies of worker-submission before those in power, of friction and spite between workers in a factory, between factories, between workers of different sectors. These divisions that pit worker against worker are not a matter of not having read the right political theses or the idealist recipes that are invented daily by the self-proclaimed vanguardist cliques. It is a foundational material fact of being a worker that can only be overcome through another material fact, itself also foundational. Competition and the vicissitudes

105. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 227.

of the market that cut across the behaviour of workers, their conscience, their practical dispositions, do not arise from a force external to the worker dragging him or her down the trail of ignorance; competition between workers, egotism with respect to other workers and servility before the employer, are a material result of workers' constitution as the commodity labour-power, as variable capital. The very historical constitution of labour-for-capital – that is, labour's material being as wage-labour – implicitly entails its character as a commodity, and thus confrontation with other owners of labour-power, with other workers. The contemporary fragmentation of labour-power, its inability to structure forms of workers' unity at the workplace-level, the local level, or at a national and global scale – so characteristic of this neoliberal era – sharply demonstrates the preponderance of the commodified form of labour-power; indeed, this is the material and procedural basis of the discourse of global disenchantment, of the emptying-out of the historical meaning of history.¹⁰⁶

So-called neoliberalism is, ultimately, the brutal updating of this process pulverising the unity of labour; and, therefore, of a new division of labour and of a new material structuring of the historical reality of labour, capable of reasserting the commodity-identity of its social existence. Because of this, the principal tenet of capital's modern strategies of domination works by way of disaggregating civil society, an assault against the forms of combination that workers in different fields have been creating for decades; through the proscription of trade-unions, through the delegitimation of structures of plebeian political mediation consecrated by the welfare-state, through the loss of citizens' and labour-rights, and so on.¹⁰⁷ But, above all else, through the inscription of this disciplining in the very material structures of the process of social labour, in new forms of the consumption of labour-power and in new technologies; all of which have begun to recreate labour, starting from the process of production itself, with a new economic, political, and cultural commodity-identity, atomised and commodified through unrestricted internal competition.

The definition of the worker starts, then, from these structural determinations, for the simple reason that what initially defines the worker is capital, the consumer of labour-power. The universal use-value of labour is given and measured by its consumer, which is capital, and as such, it is capital that defines the real, noteworthy, and fundamental material characteristics of that use-value, which is none other than the source of value sold as a commodity and that acts as a commodity, that is, that it is a fractured social object that is in frequent competition

106. Vattimo 1988; Feyerabend 1987; Glucksmann 1980; Baudrillard 1993; Finkelkraut 1995; Echeverría 1995.

107. Chomsky 1996.

with other commodity. The worker-culture elevated on top of this determination is the culture that we now see predominate at a national and global scale among workers-for-capital.

The worker-commodity, the worker 'as variable capital',¹⁰⁸ is the worker for capital, the worker that exists to serve capital. Given that the worker is a worker because he offers his labour-power (as an abstract substance or thing filled by that substance), the worker is a work because he is a commodity; and because he is a commodity, he is compared with other commodities that are, at the same time, workers. This competition among workers is incorporated into the basic definition of wage-labour; it is part of its constitutive historical materiality, of its being-in-itself.

The problem with competition between modern workers, the miserabilism that exists among the owners of the commodity labour-power, the culture of bargaining and servility before the consumer of that commodity (capital), is that these things are materially rooted in the very social constitution of the worker, and, as such, leave a similarly indelible footprint on their cultural behaviour and political choices. It is not ignorance of the norms set out by some political thesis or a lack of leadership that pushes the worker towards these kinds of commodified, alienating dispositions. They act like this because they have been organised like this by capital, such that they can exist as workers; the very acceptance of the commodification of labour-power implicitly entails, with all the force of the commodity in society, this type of contractual attitude, for otherwise their labour would be treated as lacking in utility for capitalism, and thus not having a social use-value.

The overcoming of this structural and partial definition of the working class does not happen – as a certain radical idealism among small, pseudo-leftist sects might imagine – as a mere feat of ideas (the programme, the thesis, and so on), but rather must also unfold as an act of social materiality that simultaneously modifies the conditions of consciousness and ideas and also turns these into a new material force for overcoming the primary and basic material determination of the worker-as-commodity.

The fact that the worker – by foundational, basic structural definition – is variable capital means that within the realm of modern social classes, the positions of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are characterised by the dominant initiative of the bourgeoisie with respect to the worker. Hence, we can deduce that the position of the worker is, from the beginning, and by definition, a subordinated one, subordinated by the position, possessions, and rank of the bourgeoisie. To be a worker is to enter, from the beginning, into a field whose functions are

108. Marx 1976a, pp. 307–19.

structured by bourgeois existence. The worker, from the point at which he or she is positioned in this field of forces as a worker, is a being that has accepted being incorporated into a field of forces based on the patterns and norms established by the business-owner: being a commodity, a source of value, being variable capital. The entire world as a field of classes moves on the basis of this initial logic, which must continually be reproduced and reaffirmed in order to ensure the globalised continuity of capital.

The worker is, therefore, from the beginning, a being defined by and for capital: his or her labour, which has become labour-for-capital, and the combination of his or her everyday behaviours, will be guided by this essential determination.

One look at the contemporary working class in the various historical epochs through which it has passed demonstrates, beyond the heroic legends – and as a partial, but really-present part of its history – a worker submissive with respect to power, indulgent with respect to the extortion he or she suffers, diffident towards his or her own kind, and ready to haggle over how far he or she will submit to capital.

To break this determination, to *bend* the configuration of classes in another direction, for labour itself to define labour in a different manner, is a question of the self-constitution of the worker, of labour defining itself, instead of being determined by capital. This is the historical-material problem of self-determination.

4. The determination of labour by labour: social self-determination

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. . . . At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operative of one trade . . . the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon, the workers begin to form combinations (Trades Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there, the contest breaks out into riots . . . Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle . . . This organisation of the proletarians into a class, and, consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again

by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier . . .¹⁰⁹

I have cited this lengthy paragraph because here we find summarised Marx's conception of the constitution of workers into a class and of the 'political party', which, in spite of the years that have passed, is as current and powerful for us as it was in his time.

The first moment of the structural constitution of the worker is defined by capital's initiative with regard to labour. It is capital that converts labour into commodified labour, the capacity of labour into variable capital. Thus far, the worker appears as a creature of capital, although it is labour that creates capital.

What we see, here, is the fetishism of the worker's consciousness, a subordinate consciousness, dependent on and tributary to the consciousness pre-meditated by capital. Even the agglomeration of labour in industrial centres appears as an organisation of labour for capital: it is capital that organises workers, groups them together, orders them for specific functions, and watches over them. It is the 'mass force' of labour, converted to a force for capital, that piles up the mounds of business-earnings. Thus far, *working-class identity* and its unity have been an identity and a unity created by capital for its own ends. Without a change of circumstances, workers' lives develop along these lines, totalised as productive labour for capital, which constructs its own historical hegemony over workers.

Nonetheless, as against the conditions of the modern worker's reality, there exists another material possibility: that the worker will break these multi-layered chains of submission. First, this takes place at an individual level, against the boss, the individual capitalist, when the worker is no longer silenced by internal fears, is tired of abuse, and wants to take back the human dignity buried underneath his or her bought-off docility. This is the beginning of a multi-layered series of ruptures with workers' previous existence and, therefore, a series of antagonisms with the dispositions of capital, thus giving rise to *the constitution of workers into a class by their own affirmation*.

This will immediately pose the need to stop seeing oneself as a vulgar commodity or as a salesman, and, therefore, the need to relate to other workers not as competitors, but as associates. The coming about of such circumstances and the refusal to allow this partial cohesion of labour to be undermined will lead to the emergence of permanent coalitions for labour to attain its objectives. If these local associations only demand that they themselves should reap the rewards of the selling of their commodity, we will have partially overcome competition among the workers of one factory or branch of industry, but only for it to again

109. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 228–30.

take hold at the level of the different sectors or regions. That is, instead of the individual commercial subject represented by a single individual, we have a collective entity that simply manifests the competition among workers at a greater, corporate-structural level; but the commercial foundations remain the same.

However, this partial level of unity represents a development in the confrontation between labour and capital that may bring about a greater practical comprehension of the fruits of unity. Insofar as this unity is not alienated, refunctionalised by capital – as in the majority of cases – it will be able to provide space for more fierce struggles, for rebellions and triumphs that, through their partial character (limited to one town or branch of industry) will have the counterfinality of intensifying the conditions of the oppression of workers in other, less organised branches. As such, the competition among workers will be further accentuated and will conspire against the existing green shoots of local unity.

But there is also another possibility: that these local struggles grow and, at some moment, come together in a national struggle, that is, in a struggle challenging the meaning of capital as a primary, organic totality;¹¹⁰ challenging the space of domination, of control, of the direction of social life. As such, the class-struggle takes the form of a general political struggle that puts into question existing power-relations and whose outcome, continuing this process of accumulation, will depend on the correlations of economic, political, cultural, and military powers forged in previous years and decades, now converging in one same defining moment: the uprising.

Nonetheless, things could take another course: this self-formation of the proletariat into a class does not necessarily culminate in a confrontation with capital, for this proletarian unity, with the same power with which it was born, 'is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves'; everything that has been achieved thus 'melts into air', obliging the workers to re-establish their unity on the ruins of their previous unity. And even if this were not the case, and these struggles, turning into uprisings, were to triumph, this would not in itself ensure victory for the workers' cause. After all, they themselves can be forces politically productive for capital, which, instead of overcoming its logic, generalise it throughout the country, as took place in the USSR. In this case, as Marx foresaw even in his time, the proletarian revolution will have been a simple political revolution helping to establish the general social domination of the bourgeoisie.¹¹¹

110. With regard to the nation thought through the prism of the value-form, see Echverría 1984; Zavaleta 1986b; García Linera 1995.

111. 'If therefore the proletariat overthrows the political rule of the bourgeoisie, its victory will only be temporary, only an element in the service of the *bourgeois revolution*

There is, therefore, neither an inevitable path towards the victory of revolution, nor do workers go through a gradual, historically ascending rise to the position of an organised class. This has been one among the harmful idealist myths promoted by pseudo-leftism, imprisoned by a linear, mechanistic perspective that substitutes the course of events preconceived in the feverish minds of prophets for the contingent, historical development of social struggle.

The constitution of workers into a revolutionary class is a historical process by which workers construct themselves as a reality and a unity over and above that which capital has defined them as. Although they have to start from the pathetic state that capital has made of them, thus establishing the material conditions of possibility for what they may become, the workers must work on themselves, moulding themselves with a view to what they want to be, overthrowing the prescriptions for their existence established by others who have deformed and dominated them. Here, freedom and necessity fuse together, for, on the one hand, the construction of the working class by the workers themselves is *the production of an autonomous subject*, of a subject that defines itself as a collectivity, one that chooses and determines the formation of its historical horizon. In these conditions, workers' freedom is the process of their liberation from being workers-for-capital; as such, they stop being workers insofar as they affirm themselves as freely-associated workers. On the other hand, workers' self-construction for themselves begins from the material conditioning of workers' reality performed by capital (in itself); its field of possibilities is set by what capital has moulded over the body of the worker (whether potentially or overtly so). Anything that workers do, including their collective self-negation as workers, they must do starting from and based upon their existence as workers, the social needs this evokes, their mutilated existence, and the potentialities contained and constrained in their existence as workers for capital.

The self-construction of the working class is, simultaneously, the process of the *self-dissolution* of this same class, for the working class exists only insofar as it is a dominated, extorted, and divided class. The unification of workers on a general scale, the rebellion against exploitation and disobedience towards relations of domination that characterises workers' self-affirmation, is, simultaneously, the negation of their dominated being; that is, of their existence as workers for capital. It is for this reason that Marx states that the working class can only free itself by abolishing the very structuration of class-society, 'by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous

itself, as in the year 1794, as long as in the course of history, in its "movement", the material conditions have not yet been created which make necessary the abolition of the bourgeois mode of production and therefore also the definitive overthrow of the political rule of the bourgeoisie': Marx 1976d, p. 319.

mode of appropriation'.¹¹² But the proletarian negation of the worker-for-capital is the positive affirmation of the communal existence negated by capital. In the revolutionary process, the proletariat negates a negation, and as such positively produces its self-determination.

In Marx, it is the concept of the 'revolutionary class' that allows for a synthesis of this contradiction in the process of the production of proletarian self-determination: workers constitute themselves as a class-for-itself, but only in order to begin to dissolve their class-existence, given that they belong to such a category only insofar as they acquiesce to domination. The struggle against domination is a struggle against their class-situation; but this situation of domination can only be defeated by the working class dissolving itself as such. The revolutionary class is, therefore, the historical process of the collective working-class struggle to cease to be the working class, namely, the dominated and exploited class. Through a long historical process, they become no longer a class, since this, given the workers' function, is but a euphemism for their domination. The revolutionary perspective of the proletariat, when it is being built, is not to be a class, nor even a ruling class, but rather to extinguish itself as such, thus extinguishing all class-rule. Workers' emancipation, in distinction from all past revolutions, does not aim at the establishment of another structure of class-rule, but rather at overcoming class-relations themselves.¹¹³

Only this communist horizon renders intelligible and offers meaning to intermediate steps and 'immediate objectives', which can serve its achievement, since 'the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class'.¹¹⁴ For the revolutionary movement to stop at any intermediate step, that is, where communism has not completely overcome capitalism and coexists with it or plays a subsidiary role in promoting it (revolutions by stages, or the permanent revolution), can only provoke capital to come back and devour labour. The forces of communism are thus alienated, becoming forces for capitalism.

112. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 232.

113. To Bakunin's question 'what does it mean to talk of the proletariat 'raised to the level of ruling estate?', Marx replied: 'It means that the proletariat, instead of fighting in individual cases against the economically privileged classes, has gained sufficient strength and organisation to use general means of coercion in its struggle against them; but it can only make use of such economic means as abolish its own character as wage labourer and hence as a class; when its victory is complete, its rule too is therefore at an end, since its class character will have disappeared': Marx 1989a, pp. 518–9. With regard to the Paris Commune, Marx wrote: 'The Commune does not [do] away with the class struggles, through which the working classes strive for the abolition of all classes and, therefore, of all [class-rule]... but it affords the rational medium in which that class struggle can run through its different phases in the most rational and humane way... It begins the *emancipation of labour*': Marx 1977, pp. 556–7.

114. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 243.

In any of its moments of self-emancipation, from the resistance made by the individual worker to the transformation of the proletariat into the ruling class, the existence of the worker-for-capital and the worker-for-himself are in raging, indissoluble flux, each competing to dominate over the other. In each moment of the worker's existence as a commodity, there is the material possibility of a process – whether slow or rapid – whereby workers establish their autonomy in the face of capital and its expansion. At each step in the advance of workers coming together as the revolutionary class, there is the material possibility of competition and the disintegration of that unity by the forces of capital. Indeed, the contemporary history of capitalism is none other than the contradictory historical course, the incessant ebb and flow, of this condensed flow of social forces called social classes. If capital advances, creates machines, modifies nature for its own ends, it is because it needs to do so in order to create conditions for the submission of workers' labour. This labour will itself, in the long run, find ways of inventing, renewing, or reproducing its means of unification in the face of capital, on the basis of these new facts; without extending itself to a national and, later, global scale, it will again be crushed by capital and its organisational and technological transformations. This is an uninterrupted process that can only be concluded by means of the utter extinction of capitalism and of the class-relations that sustain it.

This means that workers' acquisitions of history, consciousness and organisation are never permanent and definitive. Rather, each is the contradictory historical fruit of a correlation of specific antagonistic forces and synthesises this tension; it must be dissolved in these tensions anew so as to give rise to other temporal crystallisations and solidifications, which will themselves dissolve in the lava-cauldron of class-relations. Behind each self-organising advance of labour, capital lies in wait, and it will use all economic, political, and cultural means at hand in order to dilute labour's achievements or to twist them and refunctionalise them. Trade-unions, cooperatives, credit-unions, union-federations, parties – all carry in their stomachs and in their development this double, contradictory nature of class-relations. That is, no creation, invention, theory, or institution of the dominated is free of this threat of becoming its opposite; it is precisely because of this that the dominated classes are themselves dominated.¹¹⁵

Only the historical movement of the revolution, the historical process revolutionising social power-relations – starting from the point at which capital sets production in motion and finishing, if it does finish, when capital as a social relation becomes an archaic relic – is actually revolutionary. The communist revolution is, then, the process that starts with capitalism and goes through

115. Therborn 1978; Barrington Moore 1978; De Giovanni 1984.

different stages of intensification, of retreat, of small victories and massive defeats that create new conditions for possible future, more extensive victories. If this process does finish, it will do so in communism – that is, if it is ever achieved. Marx called this the ‘movement [that] is going on before our eyes’.¹¹⁶

The social revolution is not some *putsch* by an adventurous vanguard,¹¹⁷ or some *coup d'état* that topples bad state-officials in favour of more selfless ones, committed to or educated in ‘the programme’. Rather, it is a long process of social, economic, political, and cultural self-determination, one which begins in each labour-centre, beginning isolated in various regions and countries; one which is capable of materially interconnecting its practices, attitudes, and achievements, so as to create a new sense of the practical totalisation of labour which both totalises itself and overcomes the totalisation of capital. It is, then, an achievement of the masses, of its behaviours, its beliefs, its actions, its creations, its dreams, its material objectives, which, in their unification, are capable of producing *new power-relations*. These new power-relations are produced first at a national scale (‘[the proletariat must] rise to be the leading class of the nation’ says the *Manifesto*), and then at a global scale (since capital is a global relation) as a *new form of exercising power in an untamed manner*,¹¹⁸ one that allows the masses to present themselves, to themselves, as a fact, without the mediation of representation, which has been precisely the technique used to restrain and alienate the role of collective power.

Thus, the constitution of the revolutionary class is, from all points of view, the material deed of a class that cannot be supplanted by the expertise of vanguards, the mysticism of a handful of militants, or the prolific writings of some do-gooder. The constitution of the revolutionary class is a historical fact that completes the historical experience of class itself, of the variegated multitude that valorises capital. This material movement of self-construction, which is a

116. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 225.

117. ‘It need scarcely be added that these conspirators do not confine themselves to the general organising of the revolutionary proletariat. It is precisely their business to anticipate the process of revolutionary development, to bring it artificially to crisis-point, to launch a revolution on the spur of the moment, without the conditions for a revolution. For them the only condition for revolution is the adequate preparation of their conspiracy. They are the alchemists of the revolution and are characterised by exactly the same chaotic thinking and blinkered obsessions as the alchemists of old. They leap at inventions which are supposed to work revolutionary miracles: incendiary bombs, destructive devices of magic effect, revolts which are expected to be all the more miraculous and astonishing in effect as their basis is less rational. Occupied with such scheming, they have no other purpose than the most immediate one of overthrowing the existing government and have the profoundest contempt for the more theoretical enlightenment of the proletariat about their class interests... in the modern revolution this section of the proletariat is also insufficient and that only the proletariat as a whole can carry the revolution through’: Marx 1978b, pp. 318, 321.

118. Foucault 1985.

process of the general self-determination of labour in the face of capital, Marx calls the *political party of the class*.

The revolutionary party of the class is, for Marx, none other than the social process by which the workers construct their own autonomy in the face of capital. This has two general-historical implications. In the first place, that it is a process that completes workers as a whole, in their totality, and in their everyday life, in a given workplace, in a given area, in a given country, and across the world. Secondly, that it cannot be substituted by the sheer devoted militancy, theoretical astuteness or radicalism of the supporters of some sect's prophet: either the party is a product of the movement of the material self-emancipation of labour, or it is no more than the farce of a handful of impostors claiming to speak in the name of the workers.

Insofar as capital is a social and material reality that alienates labour, and communism is none other than 'the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things',¹¹⁹ the overcoming of this reality must be a similarly social and material fact, one that involves the working classes as a whole and their collective action in practice. The party is, then, the long movement of the historical constitution of the proletarian mass into a subject in charge of its own destiny, by means of the elaboration of multiple, mass and practical forms capable of producing a reality different from that established by capital. The *party*, in this sense, *is a material fact of the masses*, not of sects or vanguards; it is a movement of practical actions, not just theoretical acquisitions; it is the class-struggle carried out by the working class itself, not a programme or 'an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself'.¹²⁰

It is also in this context that we should read the *Manifesto's* statement that 'of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class'.¹²¹ Marx and Engels are saying neither that it is only the proletariat that must face the bourgeoisie, nor that the proletariat is revolutionary *par excellence*. In the first case, the *Manifesto* itself speaks about the possible revolutionary action of a section of what it calls the middle-classes,¹²² and in later years, in Marx's encounter with social formations in Russia, Asia, and the Americas, he will study the revolutionary and communist potential of communal structures contemporary with the capitalist system.¹²³ In the second, the

119. Marx and Engels 1975a, p. 49.

120. Ibid.

121. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 231.

122. Ibid. See also Marx 1963.

123. 'One circumstance very favourable, from the historical point of view, to the preservation of the 'agricultural commune' by the path of its further development is the fact that it is not only the contemporary of Western capitalist production and is thus able to appropriate its fruits without subjecting itself to its *modus operandi*, but has outlasted

definition of the worker as variable capital, as a good, overturns any possibility of deifying the proletariat as the revolutionary being *par excellence*.¹²⁴

Given that workers are defined, from the outset, as a commodity for capital, it is not their structural definition that produces a revolutionary position – instead, this definition is precisely what it must reject. On the contrary, what is revolutionary is the process of negating this existence imposed by capital, the collective negation of one's existence as a worker. It is for this reason that the *Manifesto*, in affirming the revolutionary character of the proletariat, makes this revolutionary position conditional *on the struggle*, on the confrontation with the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary content does not precede the struggle, but the opposite: the struggle against capital, which is a contingent historical fact, a choice, is what turns the workers into a revolutionary proletariat. This revolutionary content is not, then, a transcendental essence deposited in workers, waiting to be realised at a certain given moment. That would be to replace history with a transhistorical metaphysics. Rather, the revolutionary content is something that must be conquered on the terrain of the everyday practice of the struggle. This is a struggle that not only never finishes, but is also never static, for its continuation demands that it constantly be produced anew: it is always being undermined by renewed competition among workers, and this will keep happening so long as relations of value like the measurement of social labour remain in place.¹²⁵

What is 'truly revolutionary', for Marx, is not the worker himself, but the worker in the struggle against capital: and it is precisely this that Marx takes into account when, for example, in December 1849, referring to the working masses in France and Germany, he suggests that 'they might be revolutionaries by name, but they evidently are not in their actions';¹²⁶ or when he refers to the embourgeoisement of the French proletariat on account of the prevailing reaction and

the era when the capitalist system still appeared to be intact; that it now finds it, on the contrary, in Western Europe as well as in the United States, engaged in battle both with the working-class masses, with science, and with the very productive forces which it engenders – in a word, in a crisis which will end in its elimination, in the return of modern societies to a superior form of an "archaic" type of collective property and production': Marx 1989d, p. 346.

124. Referring to those members of the Communist League who told the workers, as do our present-day pseudo-leftists, that 'we must come to power immediately or we might as well go to sleep', Marx countered: 'The world "proletariat" has been reduced to a mere phrase, like the word "people" was by the democrats. To make this phrase a reality one would have to declare the entire petty bourgeoisie to be proletarians, i.e. *de facto* represent the petty bourgeoisie and not the proletariat. In place of actual revolutionary development one would have to adopt the revolutionary phrase': Marx 1973b, p. 341.

125. On the conditions of overcoming the law of value, see Marx 1970; 1973a, pp. 704–7; 1989e.

126. Marx 1983b, p. 58.

state of prosperity;¹²⁷ or when he comments on the 'servile spirit' of the English worker.¹²⁸

In the *Manifesto*, the party is a prolonged historical action that calls on the entire class materially: all its attitudes, all its actions, all its perceptions, and all its creative capacities. It does so for two obvious reasons: firstly, because the domination of capital is a material reality that totalises life, and it can only be surmounted by labour employing equally material realities to retotalise life according to its own designs; and secondly, because the formation of classes is not the result of their being named as such, although that contributes to it: it is a practical reality that cuts across all spheres of social life. Hence, the strong concept of the party in Marx cannot be reduced either to the action of an enlightened élite of devotees that creates a network of political clientele or followers, nor to the acquisition of consciousness, of a culture 'injected' into that clientele so that, in the end, they will know what to do.¹²⁹

This false way of understanding and going about organising the 'Marxist party' – one which has, in the last century, been complicit in defeats for revolution around the world – is, at root, a renovation of liberal and idealist discourse in the deformed guise of a so-called 'Marxism'.¹³⁰

Liberal, because it proposes that a noisy élite upholding a bunch of 'principles invented by some universal reformer' can supplant class and its material

127. Marx 1983c, p. 265.

128. Marx 1985b, p. 429. Commenting on the distortion Lassalle had made of this paragraph from the *Manifesto*, Marx indicated: 'From this point of view, therefore, it is again nonsense to say that it, together with the bourgeoisie, and with the feudal lords into the bargain, "form only one reactionary mass" relative to the working class. Has one proclaimed to the artisan, small manufacturers, etc., and peasants during the last elections: Relative to us, you, together with the bourgeoisie and feudal lords, form one reactionary mass?': Marx 1989f, p. 89. Similarly, Engels was blunt with respect to Lassalle: 'In the first place Lassalle's high-sounding but historically false phrase is accepted: in relation to the working class all other classes are only one reactionary mass. This proposition is true only in a few exceptional cases: for instance, in a revolution of the proletariat, like the Commune, or in a country where not only the bourgeoisie has moulded state and society in its own image but where in its wake the democratic petty bourgeoisie, too, has already carried out this remoulding down to its final consequences': Engels 1970a, p. 32. On Marx's position with respect to the revolutionary action of rural workers in the face of capital, see García Linera 1991.

129. 'For almost 40 years we have emphasised that the class struggle is the immediate motive force of history and, in particular, that the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is the great lever of modern social revolution; hence we cannot possibly co-operate with men who seek to eliminate that class struggle from the movement. At the founding of the International we expressly formulated the battle cry: The emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. Hence we cannot co-operate with men who say openly that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves, and must first be emancipated from above by philanthropic members of the upper and lower middle classes': Marx and Engels 1989, p. 253.

130. Wallerstein 1995.

process of political and cultural self-construction. These ‘representatives’ of the proletariat, the ventriloquists of the authentic, multiform voice of the proletariat, assign themselves a role similar to that of the ideologues of liberalism, one which consists of developing political techniques for supplanting the general will with the control of a few ‘representatives’, whether parliamentarians, virtuous bureaucrats, or, in this case, the learned members of some pseudo-vanguard. In all these cases, the effect is the same: to keep political action – that is, the management of the affairs concerning society as a whole – as the private patrimony of a few ‘specialists’ bearing authority over society.

But, more importantly, it is a liberalism wrapped up in an unsophisticated philosophical idealism, reducing the problem of the construction of the party to one of ideas, discourse, theses, and programmes, as if the domination of capital were simply a matter of theses, discourses, or bad consciousness. Marx writes in *The Holy Family*:

According to Critical Criticism, the whole evil lies only in the workers’ ‘*thinking*.’ ... But these *mass-minded*, communist workers, employed, for instance, in the Manchester or Lyon workshops, do not believe that by ‘*pure thinking*’ they will be able to argue away their industrial masters and their own practical debasement. They are most painfully aware of the *difference* between *being* and *thinking*, between *consciousness* and *life*. They know that property, capital, money, wage-labour and the like are no ideal figments of the brain but very practical, very objective products of their self-estrangement and that therefore they must be abolished in a practical, objective way for man to become man not only in *thinking*, in *consciousness*, but in mass *being*, in life.¹³¹

Capital, as a social relation, is a material fact that involves all the working classes; the historical process of the suppression of this relation of subordination, that is, the construction of class, is also a material process incumbent on the entire class. In fact, Marx calls ‘party’ precisely the ‘organization of the proletarians into a class’,¹³² which is but a process of social materiality through which workers begin to produce a new social meaning for the use-value of their labour, the use-value of their unity, the use-value of their creativity, and, in synthesis, for their class’s material objectivity. Ideas, certainly, play a prominent role in all this, for they are the ‘ideal part of the social material’,¹³³ but they can neither supplant nor substitute the other practical components of that materiality.

Principled liberals, in this sense, are much more consistent in their approach; they do not hide their intention of usurping a popular political will which they

131. Marx and Engels 1975b, p. 54.

132. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 230.

133. Godelier 1986.

consider flawed or incapable of self-representation,¹³⁴ and they are conscious of the material domination they must endorse politically. The embarrassed liberals of our age, conversely, hide the overturning of the workers' leading role behind a workerist rhetoric, filling their mouths with the vulgar philosophical materialism that, in reality, makes a cult of ideas as the only creative source of reality.

Faced with liberalism in all its expressions, Marx showed with extreme precision that the organisation of the proletariat as a class is a practical development that materially challenges – on all terrains of life and by any means possible – the conditions of social domination that capital has erected. It means the deconstruction of the worker-identity produced by capital, as a relation of subordination (the worker as variable capital), and for workers themselves to produce a new practical identity (the free association of producers). As such, given the conditions of commercial fragmentation that labour has been cornered into by the 'globalised' development of capitalism, the formation of the revolutionary party, in the broad, historical sense, can also today be interpreted as the reconstruction of a new network, autonomous civil society in the face of capital. I use the term civil society, because it is today overwhelmingly made up by the world of labour in its many forms of existence. And network, because the structure of labour has reached such a complex form of economic-cultural stratification that it is impossible to speak, as in the Fordist period, about some uniform, homogenous 'labour'. Each fraction of labour is creating a different connotation of its identity, thus seemingly demanding forms of interconnection akin to neurons, that is, capable of temporary and displaceable fusions, able to achieve a great degree of density and cohesion for the purposes of certain types of actions, but preserving, at the same time, a wide margin of independence and of aleatory choice in the construction of networks of common action. Lastly, it is autonomous with respect to capital and, therefore, with respect to the state of capital, precisely because there is where the historical limit of the old 'civil society' lay, in part growing in the shadow of the state and in part integrated into it, contesting the state but only so as to negotiate better conditions of subordination, that is, the amount of social bribery necessary to reaffirm the ineluctable supremacy of capital.

The party of the proletariat, for Marx and for the true communists of today, is, therefore, the combination of rationalities and practical actions, of struggles, of resistances, of organisations and individual, collective, local, national, and international strategies, that the world of labour deploys in the face of the rationality of exchange-value in the terrains of economic, political, and cultural life. In this multiform historical process, which does not necessarily require external links

134. Hegel 1991; Locke 1960; Bobbio 1987.

that are not part of the common struggle, the proletariat produces its own economic, political, and cultural physiognomy, and, in this sense, initiates its own *social self-determination*.

Hence, it should not strike us as strange that in the *Manifesto* Marx speaks of the organisation of communists, to which he belonged, as one more party of the proletariat; that he calls the first workers' parties the English Chartists and the partisans of agrarian reform in the United States; or, later, that he speaks of the Blanquists as the only authentic workers' party of the 1848–50 Revolution in France;¹³⁵ that years later, he identified trade-unions as the only representatives of the true workers' party;¹³⁶ that after participating in the International as another moment of that historical party, he dissolved it; that in the 1870s, he spoke of there being only one German workers' party, despite there being two organisational structures; or that in 1885, Engels said that class-solidarity among the workers of all countries was a sufficient basis upon which to form a great party of the proletariat.¹³⁷

135. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 235–41; Marx 1964.

136. 'Trade unions are the schools of socialism. It is in trade unions that workers educate themselves and become socialists, because under their very eyes and every day the struggle with capital is taking place . . . The great mass of workers, whatever party they belong to, have at last understood that their material situation must become better': such was Marx's comment in a speech to a German trade-union delegation in October 1869 (Marx 2000, p. 583). See also Marx 1969b. For his part, Engels, commenting on the project of the social-democratic party, criticised the fact that 'there is not a word about *the organization of the working class as a class by means of the trade unions*. And that is a very essential point for this is *the real class organization of the proletariat*, in which it carries on its daily struggles with capital, in which it trains itself, and which nowadays even amid the worst reaction (as in Paris at present) can simply no longer be smashed': Engels 1970a, p. 34; my emphasis.

137. 'Today the entire German proletariat has to be placed under exceptional laws, merely in order to slow down a little the process of its development to full consciousness of its position as an oppressed class. At that time the few persons whose minds had penetrated to the point of realizing the historical role of the proletariat no longer needs any official organization, either public or secret. The simple self-evident interconnection of like-minded class comrades suffices, without any rules, boards, resolutions or other tangible forms, to shake the whole German Empire to its foundations. Bismarck is the arbiter of Europe beyond the frontiers of Germany, but within them there grows daily more threateningly the athletic figure of the German proletariat that Marx foresaw already in 1844, the giant for whom the cramped imperial edifice designed to fit the Philistine is even now becoming inadequate and whose mighty stature and broad shoulders are growing until the moment comes when by merely rising from his seat he will shatter the whole structure of the imperial constitution into fragments. And still more. The international movement of the European and American proletariat has become so much strengthened that not merely its first narrow form – the secret League – but even its second, infinitely wider form – the open International Working Men's Association – has become a fetter for it, and that the simple feeling of solidarity based on the understanding of the identity of class position suffices to create and to hold together one and the same great party of the proletariat among the workers of all countries and tongues': Engels 1970b, pp. 189–90.

These two levels of the party in Marx – first, as a process of self-construction of the class as a whole, and second, as a specific and ephemeral organisational structure that rises on the back of the first – shows us that what is decisive about a party is its processes of politically combining workers in the face of capital, on the basis of their centres of labour and social life. Here, the party is synonymous with the construction of the class – by means of the practical action of the class itself – such that it is capable of forging a sense of totality that contests and then directly challenges that established by the capitalist system. That is, the working class, in the strict sense of the masses in a state of self-determination, is the party of the working class, because it materially constructs its own personality, as against that which has been delegated to it by capital. It is not the revolutionary class on account of its participation in some specific party. Thinking in such a way is simply an effect of commodity-fetishism translated into the political realm, converting means and products into ends and producers. It is a class-for-itself and, in that sense, is a party. In 1860, Marx called this *party-class* the party in ‘the great historical sense of the word’.¹³⁸

In turn, the party as a specific organising structure is a phenomenological and transitory expression of the process of the political self-construction of the class. The work of these structures, when they are real expressions of the movement, is undoubtedly decisive, insofar as it helps unite – within more or less cohesive, more or less open organisational structures – the fluctuating intentions and latent practical dispositions that exist within the class. A party, in this specific sense, can contribute, and only contribute, to empowering, to strengthening, to expanding, to ‘point out and bring to the front’, as the *Manifesto* puts it, the common interest of the ‘movement as a whole’, namely the emancipation of labour.

Today, the role of the party, in this restricted sense, is, then, the same one that Marx advocated for the communists of his time: to impel, reinforce, generalise, and enhance workers’ autonomy in the face of capital. This is not to prescribe the course that the movement of self-emancipation ‘should’ take, this being a job fit for shepherds who consider workers incapable of freeing themselves, not for communists.¹³⁹

‘The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be

138. ‘The “League”, like the *société des saisons* in Paris and a hundred other societies, was simply an episode in the history of a party that is everywhere springing up naturally out of the soil of modern society... By party, I meant the party in the broad historical sense’: Marx 1985a, pp. 82, 87.

139. Not coincidentally, the First International upheld the slogan ‘the emancipation of the workers must be achieved by the workers themselves’.

universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle', the *Manifesto* tells us.¹⁴⁰ The party, in this specific sense, does not invent and cannot substitute for class-struggle; rather, it can only reinforce the self-determining tendencies that are at the heart of this struggle.

The kinds of organisation that this process of the self-formation of class will assume are diverse, but they are also ephemeral, because they are a product, a result of the conditions of development of the class-struggle and, in particular, of the real conditions of the historical self-construction of the proletariat as a class in the face of capital. Within a Marxist perspective, therefore, it is not possible to speak of a definitive theory of political organisation, since Marxism is not a philosophy of the end of history.¹⁴¹

The class-struggle is a real movement that incessantly transforms before our eyes, in an aleatory manner; in this sense, the workers' organisations through which this struggle expresses itself and constitutes itself theoretically are also transformed by this movement of structural forces in the realms of social life.

There are no organisational recipes, in Marx; fossilised structures are just the property of the sects. It is in its concrete forms that the self-movement of labour against capital is woven and rewoven, and where the space for specific possible means of workers' organisation must be delineated. We must seek out the material conditions for the insubordination of labour among the conditions of historical domination, the forms of the consumption of labour-power and of its technical subjection in the process of production, conditions which are constantly revolutionised; it is also here, therefore, that we must seek the transitional organisational forms most effective for fostering this emancipation-movement.

After the 'League' had been disbanded at *my behest* in November 1852, I *never* belonged to any society again, whether *secret* or *public*; that the *party*, therefore, in this wholly ephemeral sense, ceased to exist for me 8 years ago. . . . By party, I meant the party in the broad historical sense.¹⁴²

The party's *historical* and *ephemeral* meaning make up part of a historical dialectic of the party in Marx, one which we must vindicate today in the face of the tragic experience of the party-state prevalent in the organising experiences of a large part of the Left worldwide. The party-state, in all cases, has been the miniature replica of hierarchical state-despotism, the militant will alienated as the omnipotent powers of bigwigs and party-functionaries. No sooner

140. Marx and Engels 2002, pp. 234–5.

141. Fukuyama 1992; for a critique, see Anderson 1996.

142. Marx 1985a, p. 87.

do revolutionary social transformations appear than these apparatuses show an extraordinary facility to amalgamate themselves with the state-machinery, so as to reconstruct them in their exclusive function of expropriating the general will, which, at the same time, reinforces the rationality of capitalist reproduction from which it emerged.¹⁴³

If the party, in the broad, historical sense, is the self-construction of the revolutionary class – which, at the same time, is nothing more than the long historical process of the dissolution of society's division into classes, and thus also the state – the transitory organisational structures that express this development cannot but objectify an organisational form of a new kind, implicitly tending towards a struggle to dissolve the apparatus of the state-machinery. Only in this sense can these organisational structures firmly root themselves as the expression of the movement towards the working class's autonomy with regard to capital.¹⁴⁴

From all this, there arise two unavoidable tasks for communists today: insofar as communism 'is not a doctrine, but a movement', insofar as it 'is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat'¹⁴⁵ or, in the

143. The only rectification Marx proposes in the *Manifesto* in 1872, after the experience of the Paris Commune, is precisely that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'. The commune as a 'political form of social emancipation' of the workers had shown the need for 'the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence', such that it could be replaced by a political form in which 'public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government'. Marx 1986, pp. 328, 331–2. On this rectification of the *Manifesto*, see Balibar 1974.

144. 'The Hague Congress has endowed the General Council [the London-based administrative body of the IWMA] new and greater powers. Indeed, at a time when the kings are assembling in Berlin and when from this meeting of powerful representatives of feudalism and the past there must result new and more severe measures of repression against us; at a time when persecution is being organized, the Hague Congress rightly believed that it was wise and necessary to increase the powers of its General Council and to centralize, in view of the impending struggle, activity which isolation would render impotent. And, by the way, who but our enemies could take alarm at the authority of the General Council? Has it a bureaucracy and an armed police to ensure that it is obeyed? Is not its authority solely moral, and does it not submit its decisions to the Federations which have to carry them out? In these conditions, kings, with no army, no police, no magistracy, and reduced to having to maintain their power by moral influence and authority, would be feeble obstacles to the progress of the revolution... let us bear in mind this fundamental principle of the International: solidarity!': Marx 1988b, pp. 255–6.

145. 'Communism is not a doctrine but a *movement*; it proceeds not from principles but from *facts*. The Communists do not base themselves on this or that philosophy as their point of departure but on the whole course of previous history and specifically its actual results in the civilised countries at the present time [...] Communism, insofar as it

words of the *Manifesto*, 'merely express[es], in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes',¹⁴⁶ there is no need for communists to work away at refining stale premonitions of an apocalyptic end to the current neoliberal triumphalism; nor do communists need to make it an act of faith that the socialist ideal will rise from the grave. The first is for charlatans; the second, for parishioners.

Communists must take account of the 'actual movement' that abolishes the present state of things, reinforcing it wherever it arises, making visible the general interest nested within particular isolated struggles. And that, today, firstly means to understand what is happening with the capitalist system, to see its actual driving forces, its possibilities for expansion, its technological transformations for the purposes of securing workers' obedience, its reorganisation-efforts seeking to debilitate workers' resistance and to overcome competition between businesses; but all this precisely in order to elucidate its real weaknesses, its effective limitations. This is not about moulding the reality we study to fit some mental schema, but rather constructing and organising the conceptual categories required for apprehending the meaning of the movement of reality.

Simultaneously, they must make intelligible the material conditions that have made possible the frustration of social struggles, their defeats and their conversion into productive forces for capital, as in the example of struggles in Eastern Europe. Otherwise, the conditions of the proletarian defeats that littered the history of the twentieth century cannot be incorporated into the practical memory of the working classes; and, therefore, the possibilities of emancipation will face even greater difficulties than they do at present.

Lastly, and crossing through the two previous practices, we must investigate and reinforce practically – committing ourselves to them to the full – the multiple and diverse ways in which labour at present resists and attempts to overcome the logic of capital; the material conditions for its extension and interconnection, capable of creating a sense of totality challenging the civilising order of capital; and the new circumstances of capitalism's existence that empower a plethora of new possible paths by which proletarian autonomy might erupt.

What concerns us, here, is to again in our own era uphold the communist intentionality that was present in the act of creation and the prose of the *Communist Manifesto*. It is to investigate the reality of capital thoroughly in order to find, in its contemporary existence, the material conditions proper to

is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat': Engels 1976, pp. 303–4.

146. Marx and Engels 2002, p. 235.

overcoming its social system, such as to express them more vividly and give them reinforcement. The modalities of communist organisation or organisations adequate to this new era of capitalism will result from requirements defined by the characteristics that the practical movement towards the de-alienation of labour now assumes.

II. Citizenship and Democracy

Citizenship and Democracy in Bolivia (1900–98)¹

When does the citizen arise? Basically, when a group of individuals linked by multiple ties of interdependence believe that their political prerogatives are encompassed by the regulations of the state, and they exercise them in accordance with this understanding. There is a correspondence between civic life and how it is cast as political life, as life shared and managed with others.

To speak of citizenship is, therefore, to attest to a collective sentiment that has become a matter of the state, transforming a socialised mood into a public mechanism that governs the political life of all. It is not by chance, then, that processes of citizen-formation are also those of nation-building; they are two different ways to approach the same problem, that of the constitution of the collective self.

Although citizenship evokes a set of political rights that are regulated and exercised by individuals (citizens) in a specific social and geographic space, its substance is not a law, a decree or a sanction. Laws and sanctions only regulate social substance, produced in more prosaic and powerful places, such as the shared experiences of coming together, rebellion, defeat and death. For example, Bolivia, as invented by a mass citizenry, only emerged as a result of the fifty thousand deaths in the Chaco War and the April Revolution, which connected together – through tragedy and destiny – people who had previously experienced the country as an extension of the *hacienda*, the mine and the *ayllu*. The law, a weak transcription

1. Text from García Linera 1999a.

of these events, would ultimately evoke the primordial fires of the balance of forces, of the pacts, of the audacity and the subservience that gave rise to 'rights', though it would be unable to replace them.

In this sense, citizens are not subjects with rights, though they do need them in order to establish their citizenship. Above all, they are subjects who *understand themselves* as subjects with political rights that are reflected in state-regulations; that is, they are subjects with *self-awareness* of certain political powers that they possess. The act of *producing* the right, of actively recognising oneself in the right, is the decisive factor in being a citizen, since, ultimately, no citizens are divorced from the *practice of citizenship*, of the will to intervene in the matters that link them to their fellow citizens. Thus, we are speaking about citizenship as *exercised political responsibility*, as a form of political intersubjectification.

From here, we can reach two conclusions. The first is that although it is true that citizens are constituted with respect to the state as a social space for the institutional validation of their citizenship-rights, the state alone cannot create the effect of citizenship, because it is the expressive synthesis of the citizen-making processes that simmer within the social structure. The state may foster a specific form of citizenship in order to guarantee its dominant role, and it can sanction and subject to itself ways of doing things that are different or antagonistic to the prevailing norm, but it cannot invent the citizen. When it does, a crude bureaucratic arbitrariness, buttressed by the state's monopoly on physical and symbolic violence, spreads across a society's body-politic. Receptiveness becomes limited to indifference, fear and grudging tolerance, which, sooner or later, will incite the desire for an effective citizenship, in which communities can feel that they are effectively interpellated by the public sphere. Governmental stability may thus be disrupted until such stability becomes more efficiently attuned to 'civil society'. A significant part of the neoliberal processes of citizenship-formation is marked by these bureaucratic limitations and ongoing administrative adjustments, which exacerbate the widening gap between the social-general will and state-administration.

Citizenship requires an uninterrupted ritual of seduction and adhesion between state and 'civil society', in addition to fluid internal deals and compromises. Whether the people involved in this production of collective will are a group defined by their lineage, or whether they include all those covered by the administrative sovereignty of the state, reflects the extent to which the exercise of citizenship extends throughout the social sphere, and also the *scope* of the historical ambition of this state-endorsed citizenship. Similarly, a society in which the interconnection of wills is based on either a prior work-related community or on a fanciful abstraction of economic difference reflects the social substance or superficiality, respectively, of the fact of citizenship.

The fact that citizenship is a form of power, a form of political behaviour, and an ethical understanding of life held in common, means that citizen-power belongs to a space that is both narrower and broader than the space of the state, though it encompasses it. That modern forms of citizenship revolve around the irresistible attraction of state-power does not deny the fact that the preference for some kind of political compromise was previously enabled by the civic qualities of the subject of citizenship-formation. This predisposition or talent has also been exercised in other spheres of life (economic, cultural, symbolic), outside of state-mediation. The practical will to establish citizenry manifests itself in all spheres of communal life. The state disciplines it, champions it in opposition to others, proscribes it in benefit of one already in existence, sanctions it, or educates it using mechanisms of legitimation that convert one of the diffuse practices of citizenship-formation into the citizenship recognised and promoted by the state. It is on precisely this point that we must investigate the relevance of Marx's critique of Hegel, and thus of Bolívar as well, in their aspiration to create society and citizenship through the state, when the latter is actually a product of the former.

It is, therefore, possible to identify non-state forms of citizenship formation, or forms outside of state-circuits of political power. Indeed, a function of the state is the monopoly on legislating what is politically lawful, and dominating or eradicating the multiple forms of politics and citizen-formation that are contrary to or dangerous for arbitrary legitimate citizenship.

The republican *ayllu*, for example, or the workers' and neighbourhood assembly, and their modes of political unification, are ways of exercising public rights and responsibilities, even if they are local. When they have their own dynamism, they develop independently of the state, and although different state-structures have attempted to use them as forms of citizenship-formation (the *ayllu* in the colonial state, the labour-union in the nationalist state), at times they have fulfilled the role of authentic social creations of political combination, which do not require either state-mediation or legality to be effective.

In any case, citizenship is the *process of producing the content and the form* of the political rights of a given social structure. Through citizenship, society lays bare its capacity and its incompetence to manage collective affairs, but the state, too, exposes itself, in its material consistency, in order to co-opt the initiatives promoted by 'civil society'.

To date, the political history of Bolivia includes at least three moments of *legitimate citizenship*-construction, in which these multiple social dimensions have been put into play.

Caste-citizenship

With the deliberative assembly of 1825 and the 1826 Constitution granting political and legal rights to those who had a high income, a profession, were able to read and write and were not enslaved, it is clear who were understood to be citizens of the nascent state and who were not.

In this social order, the Indians are the state's nothing: they constitute the state's most fundamental *externality*. Children must await their inheritance and biological growth to gain access to their rights. Women, who are also excluded from citizens' rights, can gain influence by way of their matrimonial strategies in order to preserve and extend the family-heritage guaranteed by citizenship. But Indians, both men and women, are presented from the outset as the state's most profound and unyielding externality. In fact, the republican state was born in opposition to the Indians, and its entire explanatory framework just reiterates, by means of administrative mechanisms, this social imperative of the well-to-do classes, with no more in common than the mission of entrenching themselves in the state to the exclusion of the Indians.

From the outset, then, the republican state, conservative or liberal, protectionist or free-trade, is built like a system of trenches and ambushes against indigenous society, the *ayllus*, the communards. It does not even show an inkling of a pretence to incorporate the Indian, because what defines the state – the fractions of society politically combined as governmental power – is precisely the permanent conspiracy against the Indians. Above and beyond the feuds between mining oligarchs, aspiring merchants and local bosses, there is the task of restraining the rebellious *ayllu*, seen as the end of history, the ruination of civilisation. The republican state is, therefore, a state of exclusion; exacting and deterring community uprisings pervades all of its administrative mechanisms. The Indian is the pre-social, with its threatening, uncontrolled horrors, hidden behind the cloak of elusive silences and humiliations.

The Indian is not part of the demographic scope of the state, but is, rather, its outer limit. Indeed, it is clear that the citizen is the subject that is constructed as the diametric opposite of what is Indian: private property against communal property, literate culture against oral culture, individual sovereignty against collective servitude; these are the foundations of legitimate civility. The citizen is, therefore, the non-Indian, one who can publicly attest to being irreconcilable with communal structures. There is no doubt that citizenship, during this period, is constructed by way of a fierce denial of the indigenous world. In fact, the symbols of power monopolised by the state are constructed around the denial of the symbology of the indigenous world. That this social exorcism takes the form of an ethno-racial stratification only validates the colonial archetype of historical reality, in which the division of labour of the ruling powers is marked by the

different racial features of the colonisers and the colonised. The social Darwinism of the early nineteenth century, far from transforming this secular social cleavage, uses rhetorical positivistic language to embellish the substance of a collective secular spirit.

Under these founding conditions of the collective identity of the ruling classes, citizenship, along with legitimate power, property and culture, are not privileges subject to deliberation. Instead, they are exercised as unquestionable imperatives, for they are the privileges of conquest. Citizenship does not present itself to citizens, then, as a production of rights, but rather as a *family-inheritance*, and on this, all the ruling fractions tacitly agree. Thus, throughout the republican period, we can speak of a patrimonial citizenry.

The only times when this *hereditary citizenship* is broken are when the common people intrude as a politicised mass (the artisans under Belzu; Willka's Aymara communards). But these democratic excesses are quickly reversed by a state and an urban-*mestizo* political culture whose *raison d'être* is, precisely, the hereditary possession of state-power.

Citizenship, then, is presented as an overt display of lineage; citizens are not made, but born, in what is a question of ancestry and pedigree; its attainment is only a matter of biological maturity, because the surname inherited is, in this case, the guarantee of political rights.

The exercise of citizenship is not, during this period, a form of public responsibility, unless the commitment is one of sworn loyalty to the perpetuity of the caste. It is, above all, the display of family-crests, of the pure blood that confirms power and good taste. Coming from the early liberals, as today from the social climbers, the equality of mankind is a discursive ruse, advancing the most terrible segregation of those who cannot flaunt the whiteness of their ancestors and their small-town fancies.

This has not, of course, prevented certain handfuls of social climbers from intruding upon this closed, inbred space and successfully whitening their lineage, thereby participating in the existing codes of citizenship with their considerable, flaunted wealth. They are the successful merchants, the owners of small factories, of coca- and wheat-estates, thrust into economic success as a result of the urbanisation and the recovery in mining of the early nineteenth century. They are also the bastard results of oligarchic mestization; taking advantage of the symbolic status of their father's surname and profiting from the laborious loyalty of their maternal line, they secure bureaucratic positions, amass small fortunes or obtain hurried educational instruction in order to be able to negotiate the legality of their family-name. But they are citizens of suspicious ancestry; their poor taste in dress, their predilection for fatness as a symbol of wealth, their aesthetic plainness or their insufficiently white faces will always offer grounds to prove their veiled complicity with a stigmatised Indianness.

Only a greater amount of money from the successful *mestizo*, along with the force of arms of the military *caudillo* of the day, unleashing ferocity against the rebellious Indians to demonstrate loyalty to the coveted lineage, can placate irate calls for racial purity and secure their right to citizenship.

But its internal density is precisely the condition of its disintegration. No self-respecting state – that is, no state which can hope to last – can persist with immodest displays of the private privileges it safeguards. It has to camouflage them as the general interest, as the common will of the inhabitants included within its geographic domain. This is why it is the state. Toledo understood this, and that is why he established the Indian Laws, which are nothing more than the legal affirmation of two forms of citizenship that were autonomous to a point – that of the Spanish and that of the Indians – but with the latter subsumed and overseen by the former.

Caste-citizenship, in contrast, is a type of social politicisation that deliberately excludes the majority of society, the Indians, from the hope of sharing the benefit of political rights. In this sense, it is a decadent citizenry, lacking propriety and historical grandeur, which manages to take heart only in the slow pace of its decline. Its death – which is, paradoxically, the extension of citizenship – is achieved by the very same mass of those until then thought incapable of rationalising the public good: the Indians and the urban common people.

Corporatist citizenship

That the armed common people conquered what they considered to be their rights speaks not so much of an epic insolence as of the collective, mass substance of the concept of citizenship. This is what occurred in 1952.

It was a point in time when the legal system became silent, the old seigniorial prejudices seemed to fall apart, and lineage ceased to be a sufficient argument for holding onto the monopoly of administering the collective interest.

Subaltern society burst forth as a subject anxious to take charge of its destiny, a subject imbued with plans for public affairs, creating a new *de facto* legality that spilled over onto the aggregate of society. As such, this society finally began to act like part of a unified entity. The practical expression of this shared sense of belonging, in this case, took the form of the social invention of the nation, which the state could do no more than endorse and then set unilaterally-defined norms suiting its own objectives.

The citizenship that emerged from the April uprising was, therefore, a result of the conditioned fusion of three factors. First, there was the autonomous action of ordinary society, which decided to intervene in the management of political affairs without asking for anyone's permission. Second, it did so with such

strength (the oligarchic state suffered a military defeat), that the institutional forms of the new political power necessarily had to incorporate the imprint of this collective energy. Indeed, the only way to tame it would be to co-opt it. Third, once this action extended throughout the entire social space of the territory over which the state was sovereign, it became a nationalising event, in that it was the first plausible political construction politically binding all of civil society together. Let us analyse these three elements and their intersection.

When we say that one quality of the citizenship that emerged from the 1952 Revolution was the autonomous action of the masses, we are not suggesting that they acted independently of the prejudices or influences of the day. When the defiant armed workers rallied together outside the factory- and bank-doors, it was clear that the habit of following orders constituted among the most profound experiences of the dominated masses, such that we cannot claim there to have been autonomy on the terrain of economic and spiritual power.

However, politically, the masses made their democratic ambitions explicit, marking a breaking point with the criteria used by the state. The destruction of the barriers of lineage, which restricted political practice, revealed an extraordinary capacity for rupture, for the social invention of public space, whose origin is not to be found in subservience toward the powerful, but in the uncompromising fervour of rebelliousness. What is more, this audacity was expressed through organisational techniques, through the union, which is, perhaps, the achievement of the masses in the last century that is most authentically their own.

That the masses opened the door to modern political history in the form of the union demonstrates that not only were political rights created as a collective desire, but also that the production of this social principle took place within its own organisational structures, which once again calls attention to the fact that authentic moments of democratisation are simultaneously periods of social self-awareness.

Politics, or what civil society *internalised as politics* of its own free will, was, then, the disciplined grouping by workplace, by type of occupation and by occupational identity, in order to jointly address the state. The Revolution has been, in fact, the most effective expression of this form of unity, and the triumph of the Revolution has irrevocably meant that no longer can anyone be excluded from this particular form of social affiliation.

There is no doubt that all this has consequences both of greatness and of misery. Of greatness, because there has been the real invention of a collective right that demands no more legality than its determined assertion. Legality and politics are understood as matters to be interpreted by all, not merely by specialists. We are presented with a new *concept of democracy, understood as union-intervention in state-affairs*, in which legitimate political subjects begin to

constitute themselves in a corporatist fashion. Democracy is not, therefore, an abstract right, nor is it a blueprint for appropriate behaviour, administered by a polished political bureaucracy, such as is the case today, for example. Democracy takes on the common-sense meaning of union-practice with the purpose of influencing the government. Furthermore, through it, citizenship comes to mean the consecration of this practice as a public *right*. For thirty years, the separation between democracy and dictatorship could not be measured in the number of votes to elect rulers; rather, it was the degree of the state's permeability to union-interference, which is essentially just demanding that the state remember that the new state was established in 1952 because the armed unions fought for it.

But we have also mentioned some collective miseries that develop over time. Though the armed masses, in their historic fury, put an end to the monopoly on political decision-making based on lineage, formal education and money, there was never a time, save for extreme and brief periods, when they would abandon the belief that surname, money and formal education were essential qualifications in order to govern public affairs. This means that the democratisation of public space refers only to presenting demands, rather than the executive; that is, the masses feel they have the new right to speak, to resist, to accept, to apply pressure, to demand, to impose a series of demands on those governing, but *they could never see themselves in the act of governing*. It is as if the history of working-class and popular subservience were remembered as a steadfast rule and, with respect to power, the masses could only see themselves as subjects who resist, demand and threaten, but never as those that make decisions, implement them or exercise power. *The image that the society of workers constructed for themselves would be that of litigant, not that of ruler.*

Since 1952, the history of power has also been the history of popular groups, of the unions, but never as a means of applying power itself. Rather, the union has been understood as a means for regulating power – regulating its faculties, its scope, its effectiveness. Thus emerges a relation of continuously negotiated rights and concessions between certain rulers, who are there because certain among the ruled wish them to be there, and certain among the ruled, who are there because they need a ruler to endorse their position of being ruled.

This means that state-power is reconstituted by collective action in its institutional externality, both with respect to the physical and cultural corporality of the masses, and with respect to their organisational customs. The hierarchy of power thus re-emerges in the gestures and the minds of those who oppose it; only now, because of their opposition, it is a power that can be questioned, pressured, and negotiated. Hence democracy, along with the legality of the union-structure throughout this period, is just the *measure* of permeability of those that believe they shall always govern, as is their customary right, to the demands collectively presented by the masses.

It is worth asking why the state allowed society to become politicised to such an extreme that the state was forced to establish its authenticity in the unions' deliberative assembly-processes. At first, it was because the state had no choice; after all, legitimate armed violence was in the hands of the unions, and the state was, first and foremost, a collective imaginary of power, objectified in practices of obedience, and only minimally an institutional mechanism for administering obedience that allowed it to impose its authority without consultation.

But, as we have already seen, the masses do not only move by means of mere outbursts. In their volatility, there is a conservative core that reconstitutes the state as the only way to understand political power, and privatisable instrumentalism as the only way to exercise it. This means that between the colonial *encomendero*, the republican *caudillo* and the democratically elected president, there has to be a common pool of *experience accumulated by the dominated* that conceptualises power as a personalised attribute. This traditional-colonialist political substance, which runs through the union-spirit, is precisely what allows the state to reconstitute itself through the union, although to do so it has had to reward, or tolerate, the union as a historical form of civil society's presence within the state itself, or, we might say, as a form of citizenship.

That the *union takes on the form of legitimate citizenship* means that, from this point forward, the union becomes the place for the concession, management and realisation of civil rights – the rights with which society seeks to see itself as a politically satisfied community. But for this form of citizen-heritage to become permanent and construct authentic processes of social identity, it is not enough for those from below to remind those from above that they hold their position thanks to those below them. Those at the top must make those at the bottom see that they did well to place them at the top, because of the set of benefits that they receive as a result. Union-structures must, therefore, channel the accumulated wealth of social dividends, which can be political as well as cultural and economic.

When this begins to happen, the union becomes the means of exercising legitimate citizenship, which means that it is a force that extends from society toward the state, but also that it is a force whose legality comes from the state, such that it can be applied to society. As such, *to be a citizen is to be a member of a union*. Whether it is in the farm, the mine, the factory, the shop or through artisan-activity, the way to gain a tangible identity in the presence of others and to be recognised as a valid interlocutor by governmental authorities is through the union. It is the reservoir of credible social individuality. We might say that throughout this period, Bolivian society became composed of collective social subjects that, as such, acquired citizens' rights for the individuals they comprised. This is, certainly, not new: collective structuring, or rather, the subordination of the individual to collective forms of public affiliation, is a characteristic of

societies whose economic life has been influenced by communal land. What is new is that these forms of identity are also recognised by the state as legitimate ways of acquiring political rights.

For thirty years, the limited extent of political, economic and cultural democratisation rendered the union a privileged mediator. Whether opposing governments, mobilising to defend them, or creating collective consent to tolerate them, whatever happened depended upon the decisions made by the most important unions, and ultimately by the *Central Obrera Boliviana* ('Bolivian Workers' Central', COB). Similarly, the union advocated indirect salary-increases through social benefits, job-security, the administration of land-ownership, and the guarantee of free education. This meant that ordinary society, as well as the state, saw the union as a place to contest the scope of what was already considered a public right. It is far from strange that the workers did so: ultimately, the union is of their own making. It is the form they have found for the fulfilment of their desires to combine together and the place where they can, for the first time, transform history in the way they want to.

What is not normal, however, is for the state to regulate the mood of civil society by promoting the union. That this was possible means that the political submissiveness rooted in the collective psyche began to serve as the technological sustenance of a particular form of economic accumulation; that is, the trade-union started to become a part of the average organic composition of social capital.

At this point, the rationality of capital begins to extend itself through the unification of the labour-force itself, accompanied by a general, effective subsumption of the organisational capacity of labour to the requirements of the increased accumulation of capital. It is, therefore, not strange that the union is, as well, the intermediary in a series of cultural homogenisation-measures necessary for furthering the consolidation of a national identity, one that the state attempts to establish, taking advantage of the widespread mutability of society associated with any revolution.

That the union is the means by which the population acquires citizenship gives shape to a specific concept of public. At first, it is a collective entitlement, founded on historic genealogy (as in the case of the workers) or on a vernacular allegiance (the communitarians-peasants). Thus citizenship is not manifested as a private, individual power; it is, above all, an act of sociability, rooted in the palpable historicity of a collective that precedes and engulfs the individual that is a part of it.

In addition, *citizenship* through the union gives way to an ascription of *political rights fused with social and workers' rights*, coinciding with the incursion of a corporatist entity centred on the workplace into the sphere of the state. As a

result, political rights become fused with workers' rights, union-democratisation and citizenship in the archetype of the worker disciplined by the shop-floor and the market.

Just like the first form of citizenship mentioned above, the weakness of this form of political life lies in the extent of legitimacy acquired by means of the state's institutionalisation of this corporatist citizenship. If the state itself arbitrarily takes away the union's legitimacy, this type of citizenship-formation is set in crisis, including the type of the nationalisation of the society that had developed around it. The last thirteen years are precisely the history of this crisis and of the unsuccessful attempts of certain rehabilitated castes, with their eyes on the public space, to reform the meaning of the political, the democratic and the processes of citizenship-formation.

Irresponsible citizenship

Since 1986, a new political setting has begun to take shape. The consolidation of the vote as the means to elect rulers; the regulated continuity of the party-system; the pacts of governability; and ultimately, the entire set of administrative compromises between moneyed elites and social climbers with symbolic and cultural capital; all structure this modern market of political allegiances known as democracy.

Paradoxically, we have not seen a broadening of citizens' rights or a democratisation of new social spaces, but rather a subtle mutilation of the social rights acquired over the last decades. Though it is true that elections attest to the role of the people's will – whatever their social status and position – in appointing presidents and representatives, it is no less true that this power turns into everyday impotence when its application is confined to the few minutes that it takes to vote, while throughout the other months and years that pass between one vote and the next, voters notably lack the political capacity to manage or alter their decisions. In this context, the democratic time of social life is limited to its most minimal expression, while the time of state-arbitrariness expands.

Democracy as a systematic and durable practice, exercised in union-, neighbourhood and communal life, is thus abruptly replaced by a freedom of choice compressed into a ritualistic act, in which society voluntarily *abdicates* its determination to govern itself and to represent itself as collective groups, as shared loyalties, since the ballot flattens voters out as individuals.

But for this type of strategic flattening of popular subjectivity to work, it is first necessary to break down the prior organic composition of social labour in and for capital, as well as the organisational forms of society under which it acquired

a legitimate public presence. Therein lies the logic of the closure of the large companies which concentrate enormous groups of workers, and the flexibilisation of contracts, which makes labour increasingly precarious and intensifies competition among workers. Fragmented forms of family-work become more widespread, diluting the formal separation between owners and workers, and generally seeking to create a technically atomised world of labour, materially stripped of the older forms of combination, of job security, which had forged the political culture of previous periods and the forms of realising citizens' rights. The catchphrase of 'reducing' the state, spouted by local pseudo-liberals in order to justify the private appropriation of public goods, has as its counterpart this very proliferation of the regulatory, dissuasive and normatising function of the state with regard to civil society.

We are, therefore, talking about a state-need to produce a collapse in the corporatist form of constituting ordinary society and, in doing so, of an entire historical tradition of the political self-representation of labour, of an entire heritage of struggle, knowledge, conquests and identities, with which – and through which – workers experienced their links to each other, to the rest of society and to rulers. Along with the weakening of unions in recent years, we have witnessed, most important of all, the state's unrelenting attempts to restrict the corporatist formation of political subjects capable of being heard and of influencing the management of public affairs from below. The old structure of citizen-affiliation (the union), wherein the individual acquired a social identity and a platform from which to present demands, is at risk of being eliminated by a state determined to demonstrate that the public citizen is the isolated, voting and property-owning individual.

It is a different way of constituting citizenship, one that requires that the inclusion of the subaltern within the state is no longer achieved via the conflictual cooptation of group-structures such that they can intervene in disputes over the circulation of the social surplus (wage-demands, social benefits, nationalisations, and so on), but rather by means of the subordination of the isolated individual to the institutionalised rules of electing representatives at fixed periods. It is the passage from the old, profligate benefactor-state – whose legitimacy came both from the tacit incorporation of collective demands in public administration, and from its ability to neutralise the anti-governmental dissidences of the needy classes by means of selected concessions – to a neoliberal state, which hopes to replace bribing the local masses with commodification and the granting of privileges to the individualised and fragmented sovereignties of the social body.

To the extent that this state-reconfiguration of the material and spiritual texture of society is realised, the democratic – its institutional unilateralism, its participatory mechanisms, the ways it is expressed and practised – comes across as

a largely bureaucratic set of social techniques that colonise souls, skew customs and eradicate some forms of knowledge in order to impose others.

Of course, the modern and 'rational' ways of doing politics, agreed upon amongst representatives and parties, do not only presume that those who must agree and converse in the name of the social interest are *élites*, whose intentions, ultimately, despite the bureaucratic illusion, do not represent anyone other than themselves. They also presume that the people must be represented in the management of the public world; they must be mediated by parties in their political action. What is more, all this implies that the *res publica* should exist as a sphere separate from civil society, and that civil society can only exist as political society through political mediators or gurus. But these political archaisms, which date back to Hobbes and Montesquieu, aside from not having anything modern about them, express a kind of invented ideologisation of political action, whose rationalism lies not in its strength of argument, but in the power of the state to legitimise it.

Political liberalism, in which the 'common interest' is constructed as a transaction between legal equals, requires individuals that are illusorily *equal and bearers of a tradable good (the vote)*, as well as subjects lacking associative or family-loyalties, in order to be able to put their tradable good (*their sovereignty*) into play. This, which seems so obvious and inoffensive, nonetheless requires that people do not have the material baggage of the circuits of communal and family-loyalties; it supposes that individuals are in a state of moral detachment and are open to the marketisation of their history, of their will.

It is based on this abstract individual that the 'general interest' can be formed as a sum of isolated wills, in an externality detached from everyone, namely the liberal state. The *voluntary choice of subordination* thus requires a restricted historical imaginary, an abstracting self-representation, an ethically indemonstrable, external, elusive politicisation. Delegating political will implies, therefore, a specific type of subject, *subjects that delegate* and are *not responsible* for their actions, because they are powerless in the face of their circumstances and are compelled to forego managing their interests. In other words, it needs individuals disciplined to tolerate commands, endorse their submission, and endure expropriations and shortages as if they were inevitable. It requires, therefore, the construction – by force or argument – of a certain 'slave-morality' that allows for the deprivation of free subjects' generic, essential impulse to continue to be free.

Modern citizenship is, unabashedly, *an irresponsible citizenship*, to the extent that the exercise of public rights is simply a ceremony of relinquishing political will, the will to govern, in order to deposit it in the hands of a new caste of private owners of politics, who credit themselves with the knowledge of the sophisticated and impenetrable techniques of leadership and government.

In the process, democracy – which, since 1952, has meant not the direct administration of public affairs, but merely collective intervention (in the form of pressure or mobilised demands) in how they unfold – now undergoes a new mutilation, such that it has become about choosing who amongst those that wield the lordly symbols of power should arbitrarily administer the *res publica*. It is a *representation*, which at the same time is a usurpation of social *sovereignty*, furthering the processes of political expropriation that began with the republic.

There is no doubt that this liberal citizenship is a phantasmagoric citizenship, in that it advances abusive processes of *social depoliticisation* and historical uprooting, in order to deposit the concept of politics and the democratic game in the hands of a few bureaucratic élites and their legalised felonies. In this manner, so-called citizens are abstract individualities, submissive consciences guided by the market-principles of economic bargaining for their sovereignty. Hence market-morality and the use of benefits to purchase loyalty, which today guide the election of rulers, are not a transitory defect that can be mended with administrative or *awareness-raising* sticking plasters; they are the spiritual foundation that lubricates these modern forms of political alienation.

In synthesis, this way of structuring the form of government and citizenship can be said to be deceptive in two ways. First, because far from extending the scope of society's democratic intervention within political space itself and in relation to economic spaces, cultural spaces and so on, political rights are restricted to merely appointing those who should think and decide for the rest. Second, because it simulates the coming together of private individuals in a state of associated detachment, necessary for the effectiveness of liberal modes of constructing political-state unity, while the Bolivian social structure is actually composed of countless corporatist segments, multiple communal ties and long-standing, dense networks of economic and political aggregations, which reveal the fraudulent nature of the liberal ideal of society as a mere collection of rootless private owners. This means that the real subordination of labour-processes to capital – that is, private property as the foundation of social identity, and technology as regulator of bodily dispositions – is not a *fait accompli*. If the economy works, if production, the market and accumulation exist, it is because a large part of urban and rural society runs on family-ties, on productive logics that have not been totally commodified, with individualities defined by their collective family- or communal settings, with non-capitalist economic knowledge and techniques, and so on. Corporatist structures as forms of local political organisation (unions, neighbourhood-groups, and *ayllus*), family-networks as productive resources that limit the market-*abstraction* of the use of the labour-force, and so on, create political identities and political practices that structurally limit the efficiency of liberal mechanisms of social (de)politicisation. As long as the

formal subordination of labour to capital is maintained, liberal individuality is an administrative falsification of complex and heterogeneous forms of social individualisation.

How to escape from this quagmire of precariously-balanced democratic deceptions? Most likely, the intellectual mediocrity of those who praise the existing system is dedicated to cosmetically enhancing, here and there, a body-politic fragmented between social *politicisation* and state-depoliticisation, thereby maintaining and further deepening the cleavage between state-administration and social configuration, with potentially catastrophic consequences. The other option, lucidly taken on by some business-groups in the economic sphere, is the reworking of collective political behaviours and structures such that they are functional to the system of electoral representation. An example of these more effective forms of political subordination is what happens in the so-called 'indigenous municipalities', where local communal political practices are incorporated and then immediately reworked into a representative and delegatory system of public administration.

However, recognising the 'practices and customs' of a local entity in a town that it is not even on the map does not represent the same danger to officials as the institutionalisation of those political customs at the executive and legislative levels of the state and for seventy or eighty percent of the citizenry. It is unclear to what degree the state is willing to attempt to form a real hegemony, though what has happened to date demonstrates that the 'tolerance' that all the state's organic intellectuals have been so proud of quickly becomes zealous despotism as soon as the permanence of their emerging privileges in this distorted liberalism is put into question.

A third possibility is that the plebeian, communal and working-class political practices leave the enclosure that currently constrains them and expand autonomously throughout the public realm. This would demand rising above the liberal scam, but also overcoming the political self-impediments of the era of state-capitalism. It would thus be an extension of democracy, beginning with a surge of social initiative that would reinvent the meaning of citizenship as an act of permanent responsibility held by every person for the fate of all.

III. Labour-Movement

Historical Cycles in the Formation of the Condition of the Mining Working-Class in Bolivia (1825–1999)¹

Since the early days of the republic, the development of mine-production in Bolivia has been characterised by the coexistence of complex forms of labour-organisation, from basic manual labour engaged in extracting and refining ore, to small-scale handicraft semi-industrial labour-organisations, to modern systems of mass extraction without rails and the sophisticated computerised treatment of mineralised rocks. Similarly, the status of mineworkers has also always been complex and heterogeneous, with the coexistence of workers disciplined by the modern industrial régime alongside temporary workers associated with communal agricultural activities and artisan-labourers in family- or individual units. Likewise, class-subjectivity has been influenced by the collective cohesion afforded by the large mining centres, where two, three or five thousand workers would live and work together, along with the atomised subjectivity of the ‘cooperativist’ and the unsociable agricultural customs of the temporary worker.

Each of these technical and organisational qualities has conferred upon each historical period specific features that characterise the objective class-condition and the possibilities for class-organisation – that is, for the development of a class-identity able to effect political changes in the social structure. In general, the condition of the mineworker has gone through three major periods since the founding of the republic,

1. Text extracted from García Linera 2000a.

corresponding to three main stages in the material and organisational development of mine-production.

The artisan manufacturing labourer

In the first period, from 1850 to 1900, the mining proletariat consisted primarily of *artisan manufacturing labourers*. These workers were grouped together in industrial centres that extracted on a large scale, like those in Huanchaca, Portugalete, Real Socavón, Chorolque and Antequera, but without a comprehensive hierarchical specialisation of labour. Instead, there was a large concentration of artisan-operators who individually possessed segmented productive skills. Although the workers started to concentrate in towns, they had not yet adopted industrial discipline as a custom or a collective preference, and as such were not prone to corporatist associations that would establish a permanent identity. They maintained strong ties to the communal-peasant productive structure, evident in their forms of resistance such as the riot, the party, the use of time and the *cajcheo*.² During this period, despite the great technological renewal that mining was undergoing, close to 35 percent of production in 'modern' companies like Huanchaca depended on *Cajcha* labour and on the hard manual labour of the *palliris*³ who, like in Huanchaca, came to constitute 43 percent of the workforce.⁴ At this point, the formal subsumption of labour-power to capital had only taken the form of a large-scale aggregation of *artisan-operators*, who exerted their autonomous productivity within the industrial system, sustained by increasing processes of real subsumption⁵ to specific technical procedures, such as processing and transportation. The formal subsumption of the labour-process was, in this case, primary, and thus worker-subjectivity itself was moored in agricultural or traditional temporality, more than in the industry itself.

During this period, working-class organisation was characterised by territorially organised mutual-relief funds and mutual associations.⁶ These were basically company- or town-structures of solidarity, with the power to make demands on behalf of a segmented labour-power market. In terms of their effects on the state,

2. A practice of native workers who, from Saturday to Sunday, would extract and collect minerals without any type of control (editor's note). In this respect, see Rodríguez 1986; 1991.

3. From the Quechua *pallay* ('to collect'). During the colonial period and in the early days of the republic, the term referred to the people who sorted through the ore. Over time, this activity became feminised, and today the term refers to the women who sort through and gather ore from the waste produced by mining (editor's note).

4. Mitre 1981.

5. Marx 1976b.

6. Ibid.

their practical and symbolic dispersion and their sporadic use of agricultural mechanisms of association allowed their collective representation to become diluted in the discursive constructions and the agitational appeals with which the parties and military *caudillos* addressed the 'people' in order to attain government posts.

The technical foundation underpinning this type of class-formation was the clearly segmented coexistence in each mine of the means of traditional and manual labour in the immediate labour-process, on one hand; and, on the other hand, innovations in infrastructure, such as rails and metal-cars for ore-extraction and transport, aqueducts and steam-powered machines for draining, smelting furnaces, magnetic ore-separation and steam-heated amalgamating vats,⁷ culminating in the definitive replacement of the old colonial '*repasiris*' who amalgamated ore and quicksilver with their feet.⁸

Although it is true that in the late nineteenth century, dynamite and air-compressor machines were introduced, setting the stage for a revolution in the organisation of the labour-process inside the mine, it was a belated introduction, and of only limited effects, given the rapid debacle of silver-mining, and consequently, of the close to twenty thousand labour-groups that were tied to it.

Late-century modern silver-mining, with its mining towns and labour agglomerations, would disappear as quickly as it arose, curtailing the processes of organisational and subjective accumulation of the mining proletariat, who would once again turn to the *haciendas*, to their communities or to self-employment. It is in this sense that we refer to a type of working-class condition and to a period of slowly accumulated experience that came to an end after only thirty years. This experience could not be maintained or transmitted in an organic, systematic fashion to a new contingent of workers able to take and use it as an inheritance upon which to erect new formations particular to their identity.

Skilled workers in large companies

The second phase of mineworker-status started at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, with the upturn in tin-mining and the appearance of the *skilled worker in large companies*. In technical terms, these workers were heirs of the former workers' traditional expertise, but with the difference that their bodily skill, upon which production depended, was now situated in a new technological reality, organised around the personal competence of the skilled worker.

7. Mitre 1981.

8. Bakewell 1984.

Labour-expertise (skill, aptitude) was no longer of a simple or routine nature, as had been the case with the artisan-worker; the personal skill deposited in the body's movements was complex, as it combined several simultaneous functions, and it also articulated the effectiveness of a vast technological system that worked as a function of this new worker's professional knowledge. These workers no longer worked with traditional handicraft-techniques, but with industrial ones, though the techniques were *subordinated* to the skilfulness of the workers' bodies, their movements, and their personalised knowledge – a subordination that the movement of machines has been unable to take away. The paradigmatic model of this type of worker is the master drill-runner who, surrounded by a set of machinery and a technified work-system, unleashes the productivity of this mechanised setting with the set of corporal skills and personal knowledge acquired with experience, and without which all the technological means would be useless, unproductive. Something similar occurs with the mechanics, the carpenters and the people tasked with prospecting.

As a result of the new technical framework in the workplace that the main tin-companies began to implement in the 1920s, thus eradicating the irregular artisan-worker, the skilled worker came to have enormous power over the means of work, as only the workers and their skills could fulfil the considerable productivity promised by the machines.⁹

The workers' power over the productive capacity of the industrial means of labour not only enabled a broad exercise of autonomy in extraction and refining, but also allowed workers to see themselves as protagonists in the world: the company, with its monstrous machines, its gigantic investments, its fantastic profits, had at the core of its existence the skilled worker. It was the skilled worker, and the skilled worker alone, who could bring to life the mechanical system that covered the mine; only the skilled worker knew how to make the machine produce high yields, how to follow a seam, how to distribute tasks and knowledge. The productive and specifically technical self-esteem of labour in the labour-process gave rise, over time, to the centrality of class, which would appear to be the means by which the mineworker's productive and objective position in the mine transferred to the realm of the state and politics.

In a similar manner, the consolidation of this type of worker as the core of the labour-system created a procedure of promotions and advancement within the company based on seniority, practical apprenticeship with the master-tradesman, and industrial labour-discipline, legitimised by access to monetary, cognitive and symbolic rewards, hierarchically distributed between segments of the workforce.

9. On the skilled worker in industry, see Coriat 1979.

The great corporatist spirit of Bolivian unionism was born from the cohesion and leadership of a core consisting of the master-tradesman, whose position reproduced a chain of commands and worker-loyalties centred around him, by means of the accumulation of experiences over time and practical apprenticeships, which were then transmitted to newcomers by means of a rigid structure of worker-discipline whose rewards included the 'secret' of the trade and compensation based on seniority. This mindset in the workplace meant that workers could combine a double social narrative. In the first place, they had a narrative of historical time, going from the past to the future. This was possible because the future was foreseeable as a result of the fixed contract, continuity in the company, and life in the work-camp or town. In the second place, they had a narrative of class-continuity, in which apprentices saw their futures as masters of the trade, and the 'old ones', who occupied the highest ranks, would, little-by-little, share their 'secrets' with the younger ones, who would do the same with subsequent newcomers, in a chain of cultural and symbolic inheritances that assured the accumulation of a class-experience of unions.

The need to anchor this 'human capital' in the company – since a large part of the measures of mechanical productivity depended on it, and since it embodied the knowledge indispensable to production – pushed the owners to consolidate the definitive bind of the worker to waged labour by institutionalising promotions based on seniority. This, undoubtedly, demanded the breakdown of the workers' strong ties to the agricultural world, achieved by expanding the market-spaces for the reproduction of the workforce and by changing dietary customs, lifestyles and work-ethics, in what could be considered a violent process of sedentarising the working-class and the progressive eradication of behavioural structures and understandings of social time tied to the rhythms of agricultural work. Today, we know that these transformations were never fully completed; they even continue now, as companies struggle to deny workers time for *pijcheo*.¹⁰ Rather, these transformations gave way to the birth of hybrid mental structures, combining assembly-forms of deliberation and agricultural rationalities, such as the symbolic interaction with ritualised nature at parties, *wajitas*¹¹ and *pijcheos*, with behaviours specific to industrial rationality, such as workplace-association, labour-discipline, the patriarchal family-unit and the commodification of the conditions of social reproduction.

The sedentarisation of workers, as an objective condition of large-scale capitalist production, thus resulted in the mining camps no longer being merely temporary dormitories for an itinerant workforce, as they had been until then.

10. Chewing coca or, more precisely, sucking on a ball of coca-leaves mixed with saliva, kept in the mouth as a mild and non-addictive stimulant (editor's note).

11. Offerings to the Earth when sowing commences (editor's note).

Indeed, it allowed them to become centres for the long-term construction of working-class culture, where the collective memory of class was accumulated.

The so-called 'accumulation in the heart of the class'¹² is, therefore, not merely discursive. It is, above all, a collective mental structure, embedded as general culture, which can be accumulated and extended. The possibility of what we have termed an *internal class-narrative* and the presence of a physical space for the *continuity and sedimentation* of collective experience were conditions of symbolic and physical possibility that, with time, allowed for the constitution of these transcendent forms of workers' collective political identity. These forms were the basis for the construction of long-lasting periods of political identity for the mining proletariat, including the 1952 Revolution, resistance to military dictatorships and the restoration of parliamentary democracy.

In addition, the open-ended contract enabled the retention of an itinerant workforce. This contractual form, so characteristic of the Bolivian proletariat in general – and the mining proletariat in particular – from the 1940s, was made into law in the 1950s.

The open-ended contract ensured the retention of skilled workers, their knowledge, their occupational continuity and their affiliation with the company for long periods. Indeed, this was a necessity for the companies, allowing the effective implementation of technological and organisational changes in capitalist mining investments. But, in addition, it allowed the creation of a social representation of homogenous time and cumulative practices that culminated in a worker's life-cycle ending with retirement and the support of new generations. The open-ended contract allowed the future of the individual to be seen as part of a long-lasting collective evolution, and, therefore, it allowed workers to commit to this future and to this collective, because their achievements could be appropriated over time. We are speaking of the construction of a *class-time* characterised by predictability, a sense of assured destiny and geographic roots that allowed long-term commitments and virtuous risk-taking in pursuit of an attainable future – a future that was worth fighting for, since it existed, it was tangible. Nobody struggles without at least a little confidence that they can win, nor do they fight without at least a little conviction that they will be able to take advantage of the rewards over time. The skilled worker's open-ended contract positively established the belief in a future worth fighting for, because, after all, a future can only be fought for when it is certain that there is a future.

Thus, this modern skilled worker appears in history as a condensed subject, bearer of a specific social temporality and a long-lasting narrative power that form the basis of the mining proletariat's most important class-affirming actions

12. Zavaleta 1985.

over the last century. The historic virtue of these workers lies precisely in their ability to have used these conditions of material and symbolic possibility for their own ends. From here emerged the great narrative with which these generous workers would infuse and dignify the history of this small country.

This form of proletarianisation of the mining workforce was technically grounded in the gradual replacement of diesel- and coal-generators with electricity as the motive power for the machines and with the use of railways and trucks for ore-transport, which increased the technical division of labour and radically replaced the motive power for transportation and hauling. In the refineries, the 'sink and float' system of pre-concentration was introduced,¹³ which ultimately replaced the work of the *palliris*. Meanwhile, in extraction-processes, whether by the traditional method or the new one, called block-caving, electrical drive and the use of electric or compressed-air bores reconfigured labour-processes and firmly established the importance of skilled workers in mine-production.

Of course, it is not the case that this revolution in the technological and organisational foundations of capitalist labour alone created the qualities of the industrial mining proletariat; such a mechanistic view ignores the fact that similar technical systems can give rise to radically different social and subjective responses from one country, town or company to another. What matters, in any case, is what Zavaleta calls the '*mode of reception* of technical structures'; that is, the way in which they are elaborated, signified, circumvented, utilised and exploited by social groups. In this act, workers come with their own unique experiences and memories, work-related customs and specific knowledge, families and local environments, and with this unique baggage, which cannot be replicated elsewhere, they give new cultural meaning to the changed technical foundations of their activity. The characteristics of this interpretation and assimilation are the result of previous cultural frameworks being applied to the new materiality, with a subsequent predominance of the past over the present, of inherited mental frameworks and learned practices over mechanical qualities.

But, at the same time, these necessary mental frameworks can only be awoken from dormancy or from a state of potentiality by this new technological foundation. What is more, they take on an objective dimension: they become embedded, devalued or broadened to the same degree as the existence of these technical structures. In this sense, the technical-material composition is a determinant of the symbolic organisational composition of the worker. The historical interaction of these levels of determination is what gives us the formation of the class-condition. Thus, it is not by chance that the groups that most contributed to creating a vigorous working-class subjectivity, with the ability to influence

13. Contreras 1994.

politics and the state, were those that were concentrated in large companies, in which these qualities of the material composition of class were fully instituted. Patiño Mines, Llallagua, Oploca, Unificada, Colquiri and Araca are the workplaces where, from very early on, forms of workers' organisation were built, starting with mutual-relief funds and mutual associations and quickly moving to places of study and territorially-based leagues and federations able to bring together people with different occupations located in the same geographic area. Proletarians, employees, shopkeepers and tailors participate in the same organisation, thereby strengthening its capacity for local social mobilisation, albeit with a greater possibility of the specific interests of the wage-earners becoming diluted amidst the interests of other sectors with more organising experience and a better command of the codes of legitimate language.

The passage to the union-form in these large mining centres was not an instant process. The unions of miscellaneous trades came first, emerging in the 1920s and continuing the tradition of territorial groupings. Eventually, following the Chaco War, workplace-unions, which became the dominant form of labour-organisation in mining, were created.

Starting from these organisational nodes such as unions and cultural associations, over time a network came to be organised, giving way to the most important corporatist class-identity in Bolivian society, first based around the *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia* ('Union-Federation of Bolivian Mineworkers', FSTMB), and later, after the April 1952 Revolution, with the *Central Obrera Boliviana* ('Bolivian Workers' Central', COB). Prior to 1952, supported by the institutional form of the union as a site of accumulation of class-experience, an entire worker-narrative had been elaborated, founded on the drama of the massacres of barechested workers, women wrapped in tricolour flags and a self-made perception maintaining that the country existed thanks to their work. The other mental frameworks with which the workers imagined their future were founded upon the absolute certainty that so much suffering would earn their collective redemption. This is why, since the 1952 Revolution, mineworkers have seen themselves as a collective body of torment, bearers of an attainable future that, precisely because it is viable, can be worth taking risks for and fighting for in a sustained manner. There is a specific productive subjectivity¹⁴ that links occupational and street-sacrifices to a future historical reward. These organisational, material and symbolic qualities of the mining proletariat began in the 1930s, were at their peak in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and declined in the 1980s. They met their end in a non-heroic and largely miserable fashion in the late 1980s, with the dismantling of the large mining centres, the

14. Negri 1984.

progressive death of the skilled worker, and the development of a new type of working-class condition in the mines.

The mineworker with flexible industrial specialisation

The end of the tin-based cycle in Bolivian mining has also been the end of state-run mining, of the major mineworkers' fortresses, of unions as mediators between state and society and as a mechanism for social mobility. It has also been the end of the industrial skilled worker and of the class-identity constructed around all these technical, political and cultural elements. Nothing, to date, has completely replaced the old mineworkers' condition; in small and isolated companies, some of the characteristics of the old form of organising the labour-process subsist, centred around the master drill-runner; in others, there has been a return to even older forms of manual and handicraft-work; but in the companies that started to fulfil what is increasingly the most important role in mine-production – the so-called mid-size mining operation – a type of worker is emerging that is technically and organisationally posed as the replacement of the worker that prevailed for sixty years.

This new worker is no longer assembled in large groups. Today, no company has more than seven hundred workers, and the internal systems for the division of labour, rotation, promotion and technical qualifications have been restructured. The new worker, unlike the old one, who performed a trade and held a position commensurate with a practical apprenticeship in a rigidly established order of rank, is today multifunctional, trained to perform various functions depending on the company's needs, among which the role of the drill-runner either does not exist, as in open-pit operations (*Inti Raymi*), or is just one more interchangeable procedure that can be performed following brief courses in the manipulation of levers and buttons that steer the drilling (Mina Bolívar). For the rest, this activity no longer holds the supreme rank that it did previously, and it is no longer the peak of accumulated knowledge, transmitted through a hierarchy of trades that guaranteed a continuity of class-knowledge between older and younger workers.

Given the increasing importance of efficiency in assigned tasks, competence in quickly-learnt procedures and the capacity to adapt to innovations determined by management, the entire worker's career of promotions, privileges and benefits based on seniority and, to a certain extent, the workers' self-control of their histories within the company, begins to be replaced with a competition for benefits and credits based on training courses ('certificates'), rules about obedience, productivity and multifunctionality, and other demands established by management.

Thus, a type of worker is being born with a very different material foundation from that which characterised the worker in Patiño or the *Corporación Minera de Bolivia* ('Mining Corporation of Bolivia', COMIBOL). Given that the productive knowledge that is indispensable for ensuring mechanical productivity lies less with the individual worker than with automated systems and investments in fixed capital, the open-ended contract is no longer an indispensable requirement; nor is maintaining staff in relation to their seniority, a process previously used to hierarchically organise the accumulation of skills and their productive importance in the company.

In other cases, labour multifunctionality, which destroys the previous system of promotion and discipline, goes hand-in-hand not so much with technological renewal, as with restructuring the organisation of the labour-process and the form of payment (Caracoles, Sayaquira, Avicaya, Amayapampa, and so on). Instead of the previous division of labour, clearly defined in internal sections and ranks, the new occupational architecture has become elastic, forcing workers to perform, according to their own pay-aspirations, the trade of 'drill-runner', 'assistant', 'rail-worker', 'timberman', etc., and even going into the refinery to process the ore. The payment-system, too, has changed, from one based on the role performed or the volume of rock extracted, to payment based on the quantity of processed and refined ore delivered to the company. This shift has, in several companies, created a multifunctionality still rooted in the old technological base, though with the same diluting effects on old labour-organisation and subjectivity.

Objectively, all the conditions of material possibility that sustained the organisational practices of cohesion, discipline, autonomous leadership and self-made perceptions of the future have been overturned by new ones, which have not yet been fully elaborated, creating new structures of class-identity. The material structures that sustained the mining proletariat's old mental, political and cultural structures have been reconfigured, and the new mental and self-unifying structures, consequences of the incorporation of the new material structures, have not yet been consolidated. They are very weak and would seem to need a long process of consolidation before taking shape in a new class-identity with political effects for the state.

Thus emerges this shocked, uncertain and ambiguous spirit that characterises the collective actions that, from time to time, burst forth from young workers who are starting to generate and to experience the new class-condition of the mining proletariat.

The Death of the Twentieth-Century Working-Class Condition¹

The miners' 'March for Life'

Every deed, and especially every social deed, is a synthesis expressing long-term determinations manifested as events, as acts. Their primary importance is that they elucidate a group of significant connections in the visible, tangible present. But there are social deeds where the present and the more prominent inheritances of the recent past are very much insufficient to understanding their real significance and transcendence. They are 'presents' that transcend their times; their profound truth can only be discovered in the future. We are speaking, then, about events that do not reveal at the time of their occurrence the entire truth implicit within them. Furthermore, they characterise an era, because they pull all other present and past events in a direction whereby they become complete and make sense. These are not, then, daily events, but rather condensations of an era. When they eventually supply us with the language that we need to understand previous occurrences, they divide history, because they announce that from that point on, social processes will follow new norms, though we only come to realise it years or decades later.

The August 1986 'March for Life' is one such occurrence, dividing Bolivian social history into two distinct segments. In some ways, it is the heroic, and to some extent deceptive, epitome of the modernisation-project that started at the beginning of the century and revealed its limitations toward the end of the century.

1. Text extracted from García Linera 2000b.

Indeed, in Bolivia, the end of this era did not coincide with the new millennium, but rather with an event that took place in society fourteen years earlier. The 'March for Life' was also the synthesis of a social condition, of collective practices, of life-prospects and of the ambitions of the cultural project of a class that, given its audacity, illuminated and tried to unite the disperse threads of a nation that roamed across this country's dramatic geography. It was the most desperate cry from those who, like no other collective subject, believed in the possibility of the nation and did everything they could to create it with work, unity and solidarity. At the same time, it was the final act of a social subject that had embraced like no other the most advanced and dignifying components of modernity, such as a culture of risk-taking, affiliation based on beliefs and not on family-relationships, citizenship as self-awareness and not as a gift received, and aspirations of expanding the management of public affairs as a function of territory rather than family-ties, all of which flow from a critical and totalising internalisation of the real subsumption of labour to capital.

The truncated result of the march – which was held back at gunpoint in Calamarca, with historical powerlessness channelled into fear and reckoning – would include the extinction of the only collective bearers of a sense of expansive modernity. The miners of the last century were the most positively modern subject that this country has seen – this country, where, at most, modernity has been cloistered in an élite circle of pretension, in which no small number have tried to make an impression and distinguish themselves from the plebeians. In contrast, the miners were the most authentic and the most socialised expression of the small degree of real subsumption that had been established in these lands. In their collective defiance of state-power, family-tradition and status quo conservatism, they demonstrated, without needing to desire or display it, an ontological confidence in history that has had no parallel throughout the republic's existence.

The bellicosity of their language and the audacity of the hopes for the future with which the miners heated up the temperament of the twentieth century conferred the density of a multitude to the collective plans and dreams that, now seen from a distance, stand in stark contrast to the cultural hypocrisy and political cowardice of those insipid thinkers and court-administrators who have tried to replace this social giant with their own flimsy ideas. Nonetheless, the moral impoverishment of the latter stands proud, victorious at the dawn of this new century. But it is not the kind of triumph where one understanding of the world replaces another because of the pertinence of its reasoning or the all-encompassing breadth of its perceptions. The meaning of the neoliberal world, its abstract symbols of money, individualism and dull suit-wearing subjects – which have replaced the assembly, the *guardatojo* (miner's helmet) and the solidity of the drill-runner's muscular body – are not there due to their merits:

in truth they have not defeated anybody. They are like maggots on a giant, not because they have defeated it, but because it is dead. The neoliberal world-view was only able to enter the arena because of the prior dissolution, the prior self-dissolution, of the subject that had generated an entire expansive meaning of the world. What were the Kantian 'conditions of possibility' of this collapse, whose significance we are only now beginning to appreciate, even though its effects are the foundations of today's Bolivia?

The miners' march of 1986

It was August, and miners were starting to arrive from all over: robust and smiling *cochalos* (Cochabamba residents) from the mines of Siglo XX, Huanuni and Colquiri; sober and angular-faced miners from Quechisla, Caracoles, Siete Suyos and Colavi; anxious women from Cañadón Antequera, San José and Catavi – they all came together on the Oruro-La Paz highway to embark upon the great march.

Days earlier, an *Ampliado*² had decreed an indefinite general strike; civic organisations in Oruro and Potosí had begun a regional strike; and on 21 August, thousands of miners and residents marched through the streets of Oruro and decided, meeting as an assembly, to march to La Paz right away. Trucks jammed with miners shouting their defiant slogans and trains arriving from the South stuffed with helmets and flags were reminiscent of Yesenin's powerful depictions of the seizure of Petrograd at the beginning of the century.

There is something about workers the world over that makes their rowdy presence overshadow their surroundings and allows their personalities to impose themselves upon the lacklustre monotony of the urban environment; it is only at these moments that life seems to lose its despicable randomness, reminding us of its sense of greatness. This was one of those moments; once again, the miners were leaving behind their tools and travelling in their thousands to La Paz, which was no small feat, keeping in mind that almost every time they have done so, the country has either seen uprisings or has braced for them.

But now, there was something that lent a different tone to the features of the miners' faces, a feeling of disbelief and wariness quite different from the assured defiance of previous years, when it was known that the rulers' well-being was thanks to the miners' hard work. Now, in contrast, the state, the largest owner of mines in the country, was closing them down, strangling local shops, offering bonuses for early retirement. It was not about getting rid of the most rebellious workers in order to replace them with submissive ones. It was not even about

2. Translators' note: A general meeting of COB delegates.

reducing operating costs in order to maximise profits, as had been the case with every military coup. It was about something worse than that: it was the cessation of production and the termination of operations in the mining centres, and along with their decline came the death of the material foundations for the most important mining working-class of the last hundred years.

Along with shutting down operations in the *Corporación Minera de Bolivia* ('Bolivian Mining Corporation', COMIBOL), the extinction of the material foundation of a class's history was being decreed – a foundation that had been formed across sixty years amidst private and state-control. But, at the same time, the source of a collective certainty was collapsing – a certainty that had nourished a belief in the future and a remarkable collective audacity, around which social myths regarding the revolutionary conduct of the miners had been constituted. The lack of provisions for local shops, the suspension of work-material shipments, the withholding of extra hours and the cessation of prospecting in the months leading up to the march were not merely the result of poor management. They were the prelude to the productive paralysis of the state's mining apparatus, of forms of work and workers' organisation that would come to their end in January 2000, bringing down with them the structural framework of the balance of forces that had been created and maintained over three and a half decades.

Shutting down operations in the majority of state-companies, silently arranged by president Víctor Paz Estenssoro, was, therefore, not just another punishment in a long line of extortions that mining families had always had to resist as they forged their heroic class-history. It was, rather, an order that, without consultation, brought about the absolute end of this history, or, at least, of the way it had been over the previous thirty-five years. But, was state-mining not the strong core of accumulation that enabled the country's productive diversification and investment in the east? Was it not, in fact, the miners, their struggles and their martyrs, who had lifted the republic out of the *hacienda*-sludge? Was it not they who rescued democracy?

Certainly, miners were the virtuous soul of the nation born in 1952. And it was with this consciousness of themselves that the miners blocked the highway in order to interpellate the state. But, misfortune was present from the moment that the reconfiguration – not the preservation – of the economy, of state-structures and of the former proletarian condition became the agenda of the governing élites. Undoubtedly, the mining surplus had created the *Corporación Boliviana de Fomento* ('Bolivian Development Corporation') and its more than thirty productive companies. It was the mining income managed by the state that permitted easier communication with the east, that guaranteed free, universal public education, that expanded domestic trade, that guaranteed the bureaucrats', teachers', officials' and office-workers' salaries. It was mining that allowed the migrant to believe in the possibility of long-term social mobility, articulating a collective

imaginary of social unity that was both desirable and concretely verifiable. Similarly, it was the miners, supported by the factory-workers, who had tirelessly fought for democracy as a form of intervening in public affairs. They were the founders of a real sense of a genuinely democratising citizenship, by means of the union, that extended to every last corner of the country's territory. In the end, if there was anything like a nation or a state in Bolivia, it was because of the miners in the large nationalised companies, thanks to their work and their desires. What, then, should we make of their disintegration as a productive subject and as a political subject, when not even the dictatorships, their sworn enemies, considered physically ridding themselves of this strategic social group?

For the simple reason that international pressures and local business interests – influences and interests from which the miners had never been unconnected in the preceding years – were headed in different directions with respect to what the economic composition of society and the political composition of the state should look like.

Of course, if we follow the general framework of economic cycles proposed by Kondratieff,³ from the early 1970s, the most important capitalist regions had entered a 'Phase B' – decline – which reduced the rate of profit, stopped or decreased growth and curbed capital-investment flows. This economic decline exacerbated the dispute over the surplus. Shutting down companies with low rates of profit, salary-reductions to broaden companies' profit-margins, and lay-offs to reorganise the organic composition of capital, which seems like a rigid obstacle in times of stagnation; one-by-one, waves of these measures began to sweep across the most industrialised nations, the largest consortiums, and, eventually, the economies that were organised in a subordinate fashion, such as in our country and in all exporters of raw materials.

Capital, as a sum of individual initiatives, began to pursue three strategies in an attempt to overcome this worldwide phase of decline and stagnation:

- a) To strengthen, over a period of several years, the activity of new productive branches, capable of generating a technological paradigm that, thanks to extraordinary profits, the development of new consumer-markets and attracting capitals, would be able to unleash a wave of innovation that would lift up the rest of the economy, inaugurating, after ten to fifteen years, a new 'Phase A' period, a period of growth.⁴
- b) To consolidate and extend an organic composition of capital (the politico-cultural and technical relation between the total that society invests in salaries and overall business-investment) that could establish a high rate of profit,

3. Kondratieff 1979; Brenner 1998; Dos Santos 1999.

4. Wallerstein 1995.

restructure the forms of labour able to institute this new composition technologically and ensure an attractive rate of profit for new investments.⁵

- c) To get rid of resistance and the old rules of negotiation attained in the growth-phase, when labour had been able to demand and obtain benefits and rights.⁶

All this provoked a reconfiguration in the objective condition of the class-situation, as a result of the introduction of new branches of production, new technologies and new forms of organising the labour-process. It also provoked a reconfiguration of power-relations between labour and capital in the state-sphere, as a result of a reduction in negotiating power produced by the unemployment, depression and layoffs, characteristic of the global economy's phase of decline.⁷

The destruction of the means of labour, markets and labour-power that accompanies this phase of decline has sometimes unleashed wars, in which humanity seems to sink in the quagmire of material and physical destruction, as in 1914–18, with World-War I,⁸ and in 1939–45, with World-War II. However, at other times, it has created the conditions that made great social changes possible, like in 1848, the first – and, to date, the only – modern revolution occurring *on the scale* of the entire capitalist territory of the times (Europe),⁹ or when it paved the way for the (immediately suppressed) attempts to carry out a social revolution in the Tsarist Russia of 1917.

However, an increase in hardships, layoffs, economic contraction and crisis do not necessarily lead to social uprisings. In general, among subaltern groups material misery generates more material, organisational and spiritual; the possibility of these forces engaging in acts of resistance and asserting their autonomy lies in the prior accumulation of experiences; in the extent of their networks of action and solidarity; in the creation of certainties able to mobilise people, in the confidence in shared action; and in the capacity, accumulated in previous decades, to advance proposals – all of which, at a time of social vertigo, are able to catapult the world of labour into engaging in highly risky and large-scale practices of self-determination.

That this did not happen in the world of the 1970s and after, when the workers' organisational structures began to be dismantled in England, the United States, Italy, France, and so on, has to do with the fact that, unlike in 1848 and

5. Ceceña and Barreda (eds.) 1995.

6. Boyer and Durand 1999; Boyer 1986.

7. Beaud and Pialoux 1999.

8. Marramao 1979.

9. Veraza 1999.

1917, the sectors of the working class most affected by the removal of their benefits, and that had been the bastion of workplace-autonomy in previous years, not only suffered a temporary brutal contraction and internal restructuring, but, in many cases, simply ceased to exist, like the metalworkers, the coalminers, the textile-workers and certain sectors of the automotive industry. New productive branches emerged – based on information technology,¹⁰ with its infinite applications in manufacturing, circulation and services, and the expansion of the space-industry – which created a void in the memory and continuity of labour's capacity to resist, to such an extent that by the end of the 1990s, the reduction in social benefits, wages and job-stability has forced a return to the precariousness of the nineteenth century upon a large part of global society.¹¹

In Bolivia, President Paz Estenssoro's blunt remark that '*Bolivia se nos muere*' ('Bolivia is dying on us') was loaded with the same premonitions. Either the pattern of accumulation and the form of regulating the economy had to change, changing the rules for the employment/negotiation of labour, or Bolivia, understood as the geographic sphere of the (baroque and hybrid) domain of capital, would be finished.

If we are to identify any strengths that Paz Estenssoro might have had, what stands out is his ability to always go with the flow of the rules of the global economy. In truth, it is no great virtue to be aware of what local dominant classes require in order to validate their own position. It only takes a good dose of pragmatism and an average cultural level with respect to what is going on in the world. Of course, in a feeble cultural environment like that of the country's conformist élites, this is a powerful advantage. When it was necessary to be nationalist, to fight for the constitution of the nation-state, to try forms of import-substitution, to position the state as the driving force of the economy and as the source of social welfare – as had been the case in the entire industrialised world – Paz Estenssoro did his part during his first two terms, though he was always concerned by the increasing boldness of those triumphant, rebellious workers who had placed him at the helm of governmental power.

Now, in contrast, the winds of change brought free enterprise, market-deregulation, closures of companies temporarily in deficit, the opening of borders, and the reduction of the state in order to bring areas into the sphere of valorisation and the market that had previously been excluded from this logic.¹² It was also necessary to modify the relations of state-power, changing the technologies of corporatist citizenship-formation in order to cut back on social benefits, increase profits by cheapening labour, guarantee foreign investments

10. Ceceña and Barreda (eds.) 1995.

11. Bourdieu 1999.

12. Chávez Corrales (ed.) 1998.

by dismantling civil society's rebellious forms of organisation, and, ultimately, to put an end to a political composition of society¹³ that, during the previous developmental phase of local capitalism, had firmly established norms of negotiation and bargaining between labour and capital.

In this narrow sense of the term, there was governmental foresight, a plan, historical initiative. The government and some sectors of domestic and foreign investors more or less knew that, in order to hold on to and extend their power, they had to provide new general guidelines for the ambiguous terrain in which the rules of the market and industrialisation were to be deployed.

The workers – the organised wage-earners' foreseeable prospects – in contrast, had been left behind. Even worse, the cultural and scholarly tapestry that had been attached to the worker since 1950, with the union-leaders 'made' and the political discourses 'instilled' by multiple parties of the Left, lacked any perspective other than that of state-capitalism. Entrenched in a nationalising, homogenising discourse that disciplined labour – without hiding their unbridled desire to see the common people as a mass that could be mobilised, educated, and guided and which was ready to be governed by the immaculate 'civilised vanguard', bearer of the blueprint of the laws of history – the Left had simply converted the dream of revolutionary nationalism and of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) into a more radicalised version, into their 'revolutionary programme'. They could, therefore, only see as far as state-capitalism could take them, supported by the same capitalist forces that facilitated this route. When capital turned around and embraced 'free enterprise', leaders of the Left no longer knew what to do. In a comical and ridiculous performance, they were left without strength, without discourse, at best reiterating their demands for state-capitalism to the capitalists themselves, who were abandoning it as obsolete.

However, it was not a rhetoric without influence. In fact, it was a discourse and a political practice that cultivated the conservative features of the class itself – those that stimulated a feeling of being plaintiffs, of being obedient, of presenting complaints, so rooted in the subaltern classes – to the detriment of the sovereign, proposal-making, self-determining practices of the working-class. Under these banners, a class-*habitus* was constituted, and it carried these banners to its death.

13. Tapia 1999.

The fires of rebelliousness and docility

The 'March for Life' was also, in part, a stage for these cultural class-features of the labour-movement. As would be expected, the massive march of almost fifteen thousand people, including miners, housewives, students and peasants, crystallised a plebeian form of presenting demands to the state. It thus condensed a collective, secular memory of the social body entering into movement as a means of creating a platform to voice its demands. In fact, it is the only thing that the multitude can call its own, directly proper to it: its numbers, its palpable togetherness, manifested by the strength of the masses. Here, occupying the streets and the highways, is the substantiation of a collective class-identity, based on direct intervention in the terrain of oppression and injustice and in the will for this to change.

It is clear that this coming-together of the collective outrage, making its way throughout the territory, was an impetuous act divesting parliament of its role as the outlet whose deliberations express the pulsations of the social mood. Here, the crowd imposed itself as a *de facto* mechanism of deliberating public affairs. The workplace was abandoned, the highways were occupied (Oruro-La Paz; Sud Yungas-La Paz), and the uprising itself was responsible for expressing the voice and the sentiments of all the workers. From the outset, this attested to the persistence of a particular way that citizenship had been internalised, as an exercise of rights,¹⁴ as a form of association, as a mobilised body. It was an exultant ethical interpretation of life in common,¹⁵ understood as association and mobilisation based on workplaces, branches of activity and occupational identities as forms of social affiliation.

In this sense, the march validated a historical form of understanding politics as a thing of the masses, through which: a) workers take on a corporatist identity based on their workplaces; and b) the collective worker, constituted as the union, addresses the state and, with no other mediation, carries out its struggle for recognition and for its public rights.

This form of workers' political affiliation and political practice has several virtues. On one hand, it allowed for the creation of a sense of political responsibility that became strongly rooted in everyday life and occupational activity. Given that the test for the exercise of rights and their improvement is the unity of workers in each workplace and their mobilisation, the political act is a social competence, carried out directly by the worker as just another daily function. The role of specialists in 'politics', who monopolise and privatise this collective

14. Marshall and Bottomore 1987.

15. Held 1986.

good, is thus largely limited, here, as there is a general inclination to understand managing the common good as a shared competence, belonging to all.

On the other hand, the substantiation of this responsibility, precisely because it belongs to the masses, must find its expression through mechanisms of collective unity like the assembly, the march, the mobilisation and the rebellion. This means that the symbolic representation¹⁶ of the struggle for collective rights is not just a site for the development of social identity: it can only be carried out through communalised associative techniques, capable of creating a practical and autonomous coming-together of workers. As a consequence, the extent of democracy throughout the period in which this way of understanding politics prevailed was not a problem that could be measured in votes, nor in the engineering of parliamentary pacts, as it is today. Democracy was, basically, the unifying force of the labour-collective in each workplace and the degree to which the state was permeable to recognising, hearing and channelling the demands of union-organised society.

These factors, in turn, have allowed for workers' historical creation of a self-representation that is marked by unity, occupational discipline and the mobilisation of the masses. Given that workers can only see themselves through their connection to others and can only see everyone together when in a state of mobilised upheaval, we speak of a class-identity characterised by loyalty to union-leadership and to the state of coming together in action. This is an authentic class-prejudice, the product of an interpretation of history proper to itself, in which the only permanent factor in the struggles undertaken is the union and the solidarity of other unions. While the small parties and the *caudillos* break ranks after the first round of gunfire, the union is there to protect the families, to care for the abandoned children, to provide work for widows, to spread the word about what is happening in other camps, to bury the dead. Ultimately, the union-in-struggle has been the place where those that have been uprooted from the land and the *ayllu* have found a way of understanding life; a new perennial family, one that restores the experience of belonging and transcendence, without which no human being can survive. The union – its discipline, its mobilised conduct – is the place where workers can look at themselves in history and project themselves into the future, challenging it, desiring it and submerging themselves in it. In this sense, the union was the twentieth century's only working-class organisation.

Finally, this way of understanding and carrying out political functions was, ultimately, the only lasting moment, in recent decades, when politics ceased to base itself on the activation of kinship-networks and the threat of economic

16. Cassirer 1953.

misery, so characteristic of the conduct of the dominant classes and the subaltern classes. The union-form, and the working-class union in particular, was the only place where patrimonialism¹⁷ and clientelism¹⁸ – so well-established in the élitist *habitus* of the wealthy classes and in the dominated *habitus*¹⁹ of the needy classes – started to be materially and culturally dissolved by practices and networks of modern political affiliations based on chosen adherence and ethical commitment, rather than on ‘calls to conscience’ as is the case today.

People from the most varied geographical locations, separated from their web of family- or local ties, joined together in the workplace as to use this as a means of intervention in the management of public affairs, without their wills being mediated or haggled over. The subsequent extinction of this form of doing politics, which brought with it ‘relocations’ (layoffs) and the supremacy of the political parties, dragged the whole of society back to nineteenth-century customs of political rule by means of the lineage of the governing élites and the extortion of the poverty of the dominated.

However, at the same time, there is a docile substratum reconstituted through these forms of understanding politics. The miners’ march, in its collective euphoria spreading out across the highway, was never understood by the miners as a means to seize, to actually take hold of, what they thought belonged to them. In the dramatic act of marching, the workers were placing centre-stage the fundamental way of structuring the world to which they were accustomed, and according to which their mass, risk-taking role was that of the claimant, the determined and honourable petitioner for what they considered to be their rights, their needs and their expectations. But here, the right concerned was not so much a self-awareness with practical effects on the place that one occupies in the world – and through which one occupies a place in the world – but rather, a collective act to secure recognition from the state, to operate in the world in a certain way. It is, ultimately, the state that workers look to in their pursuit of recognition of their political rights. Certainly, it was a very intense political desire that was set in march: indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that, as an indivisible component of their class-identity, workers, and in particular the miners, throughout the period from 1952 to 1990 internalised their proximity to the state and the aspiration to be integrated within the state.

But, at the same time, it was not a matter of their assuming a role in the state as an objectivised collective class-self; that is, the miner did not aspire to obtain the governmental property-titles for the state. On the contrary, with respect to the state, the miner held powerful aspirations as a subordinate, as a

17. Weber 1968b.

18. Bobbio 1987; Quisbert 1999.

19. Bourdieu 1971; 1984.

follower – arrogant and militant, but willing to offer negotiated support and consent. Workers have never seen themselves, save for extreme and fleeting moments, as sovereign: the sovereign does not ask, but exercises; it does not demand, but asserts. While the union, mobilised throughout the years prior to the 1952 Revolution, was able to abrogate the monopoly of political decisions based on ancestry, formal education and money, it never abandoned the belief that surname, money and formal education were essential requirements in order to govern.

This means that the manner of intervening in the political sphere is merely that of presenting demands: it is not executive. Workers, as a result of their struggles, see themselves as bearers of the undeniable right to speak, to resist, to accept, to refuse to obey, to apply pressure, to demand, to impose a series of demands on those governing, but they never see themselves in the act of governing. It is as if the history of working-class and popular subservience dating back to the colonial period all came together to form a memory of immutable truth that clings to the worker's body and drives the mobilised mass to confront power as subjects who resist, threaten and demand, but not as decision-making and sovereign subjects. The self-image that the working-class condition produces is that of litigant, not that of ruler.²⁰

There is an unwavering tendency of this proletariat, and in general of the modern proletariat, to seek their rights through the mediation of the state, which means an implicit recognition of the state as a general representative of society, as the site of the constitution of a sense of community and the procurement of recognition.²¹ But – and this is unique to the development of the working-class and popular condition in Bolivia – it is also a dependent belonging, a subordinated integration into the state. Labour's stance as claimants makes it clear that rulers' acquiescence is essential in order for a right to be exercised, since it would appear that, without this consent, the right would lack legitimacy and validity. It would seem that the world is structured in the class-imaginary in such a way that the class's very identity in action can only be publicly confirmed by means of positive recognition (conquering rights) or negative recognition (repression and massacre) from those in power. Without a doubt, this is an authentic class-*habitus*, which has reconstituted the conservative and dominated core of the working-class condition throughout history. It is, perhaps, to this eager pursuit of the rulers' gaze, as certification of the presence of the ruled, that we should look in order to understand the tendency toward begging in the popular classes or the propensity to see the fulfilment of their rights as gifts and personal favours granted by governmental personnel.

20. Bataille 1993.

21. Honneth 1995.

In the march, the memory of this subservience, embodied as common sense, guided the miners' actions on the streets. In a strict sense, the march, which, as the days passed, came to include more than ten thousand miners, would be the most significant performance of this class-subjection to state-legitimacy. In general, the miners did what they did in order to remind the state that it could not do what it was doing, that it could not unilaterally break the pact created in those foundational April fires, when the prerogatives and dependencies between the rulers and the ruled were established. They marched, then, to once again impose the inclusion of labour-rights in the state's legal system.

Nobody considered marching in order to disavow Paz Estenssoro, who had even won in several mining districts in the 1985 election. They marched, instead, as a ritual act and as a reminder of the historical commitment of someone emblematic of labour's imprint on the nation: Víctor Paz Estenssoro himself.

However, the fact that, in this call for the state to reconstitute the inclusive pacts, the miners resorted to this gesture displaying the pain and suffering of the collective body, indicates to what extent the insurgent tendencies, with which the balance of forces of the nationalist state had been forged, had now replaced their vigorous and daring language with an expression of collective torment over a distance of three hundred kilometres.

Certainly, the reactivation of a class-imaginary was at work, here, narrating the class's journey through history by recounting the massacres, the pain and the enduring injustice of a thankless country that abuses the very people that sustain it. We can thus say that the labour-movement produced a class-history based on a narrative of suffering, in which martyrdom, misfortune and trials and tribulations mark the only path toward an eventual redemption, inexorably won at the expense of so much misfortune. The march, the bloody feet, the improvised food, the distance from loved ones – these were the symbols with which they reconstructed their memory in order to present their demands to the state.

Yet now, there was a distinct peculiarity in this retelling of past experiences. Before, the experiences of trials and tribulations and acts of collective suffering were always the unexpected result of demands, of claims and struggles that the workers felt pressured to push forth in order to get what they considered to be fair. Their collective punishment appeared to be a brutal response by insensitive rulers, who did not change the workers' moral belief in the justice of their demands, and who would, therefore, sooner or later be once again countered with a new mobilisation of the moral certainties of their class. The march, in contrast, was a conscious act of punishment, decided upon by the miners themselves: it was not a response to the state, but rather an assertion they presented to the state on their own initiative.

What is it that brought these miners to use the human-being's final resort – such as the body, the public display of pain – turned to only when there

are no longer any other options? The hunger-strike, or suicide, in its most radical version, has always been the final refuge for those who, lacking power and influence, cast into absolute impotence, resort to their bodies, to self-deprivation and to the risk of self-inflicted death as the only possibility of freedom, the only way to escape the chain of impositions that have taken away the possibility of being acknowledged. It is the final step for dominated beings who are on the defensive, who can no longer do anything that might change their subaltern situation, and who take refuge in the trauma of their bodies in order to obtain recognition, by means of the extreme threat of self-torture or by seeking death. Their effect, should it occur, results from the fact that they have called upon the most basic moral foundations of the rulers, as human-beings, compelling them to grant a larger symbolic measure of credibility, of power to the dominated, in order to bring them back into the sphere of the economy of social rights and concessions.

The dramatic 1986 'March for Life' – which would begin a long period of marches and popular crucifixions over the following decades – marked, in its own way, the birth of a period where the impotencies of the popular classes were dramatised. Impotency, displayed in this way, is not, in this part of political space, defined by the capacity to organise large-scale mobilisations or to secure solidarity from other social sectors. Ten thousand miners walking for days was, no doubt, an unprecedented mass action, and the support of the Civic Committees of Oruro and Potosi, which began strikes on the preceding days,²² plus the adherence of communards, residents and students, demonstrated their ability to secure support from other impoverished groups. Impotency, in this case, lay in that central area of political space regarding the capacity to generate *forward-looking proposals for social action and organisation*. The miners lacked a plan for producing a collective history that went beyond the legacy of state-capitalism, in either its nationalist version or its leftist version (so-called 'socialism'); a capitalism that in 1986 would fall flat on its face before the dumbfounded eyes of the miners.

The strength of labour, the class-identity established in a revolutionary manner with the April uprising, had held the state and the nationalised economy as its material and political foundation. The strength of the nationalist state and of its economic foundation, such as state-run industrialisation, went hand-in-hand with the strength of the labour-movement. Indeed, the possibility of obtaining the social surplus managed by the state, which allowed the state to take the first steps toward territorial and economic integration, depended upon mining and the miners. In turn, the miners were assured of their social importance and their capacity to elicit responses from the state, to the extent that they belonged

22. Pimentel Castillo 2000.

to state-companies and the union was recognised as the predominant form of exercising citizenship.²³

This is why political events took place in such a paradoxical fashion. While miners and the state appeared to be the most uncompromising opponents (in the telling form of a confrontation between miners and the military), at the same time they were also each at the root of the other's histories: each was both the offspring of the other and its most enduring extension (in the form of the administration of mining production and the flow of economic surplus).

Unlike any other social sector, the miners had produced the state-characteristics of political life, and when the dominant beneficiaries thought that the time had come to break ties and reconfigure the balance of forces within the state, the workers did not know what to do. They lacked alternatives, and the only reaction that they tended toward, quite obsessively, was that of restoring the former composition of forces, the old inclusive pacts within the same state- and economic structure. They lacked a historical programme, and, for the first time in their class-history, they became conservative, as they only ventured to propose the preservation of existing conditions.

Miners, who had imprinted their seal upon the spiritual corpus of the nationalist state, had developed within the state, and their field of visibility was that which this cultural environment permitted. Beyond the pseudo-socialist rhetoric, the proletariat was nationalist, and with good reason, because it was within the nationalist programme that its unity was produced – its class-identity, its narrative, its social mobility by means of the union, and its limited degree of well-being. Thus, when the state itself initiated the dismantling of the material and organisational pillars of the former state-architecture and of former allegiances, it started to become clear that the principal fractions of the dominant classes, constituted in and a consequence of the nationalist state, were delineating a new political structure, in which workers would be stripped of their intrusion into and prominence within the state. In a way, it was a declaration of war, if we understand war to be an abrupt rupture in the balance of social forces carried out by all possible means, including those of physical violence.

At first, the labour-movement did not understand it in this way, or else refused to understand it, and it acted as usual: reviving the economy of demands and concessions with strikes, work-stoppages and mobilisations. And when it became aware that what was at stake was not the shape of this political market, but rather its very nature – the political bonds threatened by the closing of mines and the death of the class's material condition – it felt unable to produce an autonomous social project different from that which it had known until

23. García Linera 1999.

then, instead demanding a return to the old historical horizon of the nationalist state.

With this, a long-term period of defeats began. Faced with the overwhelming initiative of the wealthy classes, the subaltern classes had no other reaction but to entrench themselves in the evocation of old social pacts. This propelled them to lose their former initiative – with its proposals, with its autonomy – which only today, fourteen years later, is slowly beginning to come back with new structures of social mobilisation, like the *Coordinadora del Agua y la Vida de Cochabamba* ('Cochabamba Coalition in Defence of Water and Life').

Certainly, the problem was not some lack of propaganda by 'activists', who distributed pamphlets with their proposed platforms. To think that social classes choose their paths as a function of the pedagogical influence of a few scribes is to reduce society to a classroom made up of ignorant preschoolers and knowledge-bearing teachers and, even worse, to think that the objectivity of the development of social struggles and of class-conditions can be replaced by the ephemeral diagrams of ideas.

The powerless historical horizon that would emerge in the 'March for Life' was anchored in facts more powerful than the constitution of the laborious classes itself, including the practical acts and material effects that the classes were able to deploy within the technical and symbolic structures of their class-condition. In particular, it was anchored in the characteristics of their ways of coming together, of resisting, of intervening in the sphere of the technical and organisational structure of the industrial labour-process; that is, we must look to the means of constituting contemporary political class-identity in order to trace the production of the Bolivian working class's submissions, dependencies and limitations that appeared during the march and as its outcome.

In general, the working-class condition has been characterised by the radicalism of presenting demands *per se*, and not so much by the radicalism of the demands actually placed on companies and the state. Since the 1920s, the labour-movement has created a culture of posing demands based on wages, social benefits, food, family-protection, health, housing and family-care. These are, certainly, absolutely legitimate as minimal social and labour-rights, indispensable for guaranteeing the continuity of work and collective dignity. As a whole, they are a group of rights articulated around the regulation of the average social value of labour-power. That is, they refer to the historico-moral appreciation of the workforce²⁴ inside the space of the labour-market. This is the beginning and end of the constitution of workers as a modern class; that is, as commodity-bearers who negotiate the levels of their market-realisation, and who, throughout the

24. Negri 1988.

capitalist period, have had strong political involvement in terms of posing demands, as is the case in Bolivia.

However, there is another possible space for the modern constitution of the working-class condition, which, departing from the objective position of the subject who sells his or her labour-power according to the laws of market-logic, initiates its simultaneous dismantlement by eroding the very constitution of labour-power as a commodity measured and regulated by value. This space, which marks the twilight of the rule of capital as an economic, cultural and symbolic fact, is that of the self-organisation of the worker in the labour-process, contesting and modifying the technical and organisational reality of labour as waged labour, as labour for the creation of value. These are acts of resistance, of the coming-together of workers in order to deploy, at either a molecular or broad level, structures for managing the material reality of labour that can avoid the general subsumption of labour to capital. By means of their struggles, waged in multiple ways and over several decades, they can create an organisational, cultural and symbolic fabric that can engender autonomous possibilities of social history, undertaking historical initiatives that can contest the general meaning of the future, repeatedly produced by the dominant classes. Over time, this level of autonomous class-organisation produces political effects of a revolutionary nature, which complement and immeasurably expand the type of *claim-making political practice* that arises from the struggle for market labour-rights. Another way of understanding these two levels of political struggle in modern society is that the first corresponds to the social system of freedoms, while the other corresponds to the system of needs. An interpretation of socialism as the mere satisfaction of a system of needs, disconnected from the development of the system of freedoms, is the interpretation that has generally been predominant in the old Left parties with influence in the labour-movement, and which has created the intellectual and discursive environment in which the cultural rationale for state-capitalism and nationalist discourse has prevailed.

Bolivian labour, in particular, has cultivated a type of *political practice* that is fundamentally *claim-making* in nature, while *political practices that produce strategic alternative possibilities* have been quite limited, as a result of the reconstitution of subservience and docility within the class-forcefield developing in the labour-process and the productive process in general. To a certain extent, Bolivian workers, unlike workers from other Latin-American countries, have been successful in advancing a culture of productive subordination based on occasional uprisings and the language of the masses. But, at the same time, they have imposed systematic limitations. They have avoided, or have not believed it necessary, to expand their struggles with respect to the structuring of modern productive rationality, the continual reconstitution of organisational leadership, the technical uses of productive systems, the biased intentionality of capitalist

productivity or the technico-organisational frameworks that objectify business-logic and accumulation.

The few visible moments when this technico-organisational docility has been put into question, with proposals of co-management, indicate renewed attempts to incorporate this fundamental sphere into the strategies of resistance. However, in general, they have been proposed by ruling élites, who have limited themselves to modifying administrative and external management-issues, leaving aside the space of the specifically productive materiality of the labour-process.

That the miners came to the Oruro-La Paz highway with their helmets, their blankets and quite a bit of dynamite, but without a cohesive belief in what might be an autonomous historical future, was possible because this future had not been previously produced in the workplace. The symbolic class-structure was thus fused with the nationalist state, and when this began to fall apart, it took with it the mental and organisational structures of the Bolivian proletariat.

It is not strange, then, that the miners that passed through Caracollo, Konani, Lahuachaca and Patacamaya were not marching in order to establish a new legitimate right that they had previously identified as a valuable right in their workplace? What they were asking for was the enforcement of a right that was already widespread in the old state-institutionality. The bodily experience, representing the drama of life in the camps on the highway, also presented itself as the site of enunciation of a political mythology of the working class *in the state*. The authority of the governing authorities was not in doubt; its capacity to decide – delegated and tolerated by those being governed – was not questioned. What is more, both rulers and the ruled were confirmed in their respective political positions by the practical acts of the ruled themselves, who reaffirmed their position of being ruled when they demanded the enforcement of the old rights of the ruled.

When one calls upon the ruler to demand that basic pacts not be broken with impunity, one tacitly accepts the delegation of decision-making power and the regulated separation between rulers and the ruled. The collective language condemning the moral transgression of the state, expressed with bodily signs, dramatically performing the social hardships, further exacerbated the fatal powerlessness of these heroic miners, who exchanged bullets in their chests for the calluses on their feet in order to demand what they considered to be their rights.

The march, from its beginning to the moment that it was stopped in its tracks, was a performed reminder of a subaltern past, underpinned by the relevance of mining to the founding core of the nation-state. In the creases of the militant language and the performance of bodily testimony was the agonising remembrance of the centrality of the miner to the state, while the staging of demands was related to the expression of collective torment, intended to tear away the mask of indolence worn by rulers.

The lure of the occupation and the armed uprising, which appeared to be options during those days in March 1985, was left behind. Seen from the perspective of this new march, the slogans intoned from the trucks that brought the miners back to their regions were little more than ephemeral sparks amidst a mood marked by the passive hope that ‘someone’ other than themselves, some ‘doctors’, some ‘chiefs’, some ‘military officers’, would take the reins of public affairs in order to support them.

Over a period of years, a long series of collective customs developed, in which the workers saw themselves and acted either as fierce opponents to authoritarian rulers or as steadfast pillars of governments and proposals that broadened the field in which popular demands could be exercised. But in neither of these two cases had they seen themselves as executors of the act of governing, nor had they seen themselves as administrators of the technico-productive sphere of the company. They had always arranged the signifying field of struggle in terms of *someone* to resist and *someone* to support, without needing to question the appropriateness of the existence of ‘someone’ above them. It is as if their class-identity needed, in order to exist publicly, an inclusive third party, a spokesperson²⁵ that could validate the collective existence of the mobilised class. But here, this ‘inclusive third party’, as either a target of resistance or support, is an external agent, who is neither a member of the class nor related to its direct representatives, but rather a part of the institutionalised world of the state.

The miners’ march was, then, a component of these struggles for recognition *not in* the state, but rather *by* the state, as a form of validating the very historical presence of the working class. To the state, they said that it could not abandon workers. The sacrifice of the march was the means within reach – the only means, in this case, to make themselves heard, to ask the state to return to what it was no longer willing to be, to continue operating within the same space and with the same rules of the game to which the miners were accustomed. Shutting down operations was not a radicalisation of the possibilities of the space shared by the state and the miners. It was, simply, the end of the social space of the workers’ narrative of the previous fifty years – the only one it had known, and one that the proletariat had internalised. The end of this space was seen as the end of the proletariat, of the material and mental structures of the working-class condition. Many would speak of the extinction of the working class.²⁶ Only years later would they realise that the end of the worker, sealed in Calamarca, would not be the end of the proletariat in general, but rather of a *type of proletariat*, of a type of material and symbolic structure that was giving birth to a new contemporary twenty-first century working-class condition.

25. Bourdieu 1993.

26. Toranzo 1989.

The makings of an embittered era

The content of a historical era is defined not so much by a sequential classification of events, as by the foundational encounter of social forces, which, as the result of a decisive collision and its outcome, produces the enduring structure of institutional hierarchies, customary power-relations and a legitimate practical knowledge of mundane mental structures with which society, from then on, gives meaning to its existence. At the same time, it recasts in new ways, and in all the spaces of public and private life, the conflictual and unstable balance of primordial forces.

A historical era can be defined, then, as the daily practical and embodied remembrance, imagined and objectified, of a relatively stable framework of balances of social forces established at a specific and identifiable moment of what Foucault calls a 'trial by strength',²⁷ and from which, in order to reproduce it, both rulers and the ruled construct the landscape of legitimate possibilities. In turn, the end of an era is marked by a withdrawal of support and a struggle for the legitimate establishment of a different institutional and symbolic framework, corresponding to a new configuration of the balance of forces amongst the subjects that act in the given social setting.

The April 1952 uprising, for example, was the starting point of an era marked by the arrogant and violent incursion of the unionised multitude into the establishment of an expansive citizenship. The composition of the state would just enshrine, regulate and, when the time was right, utilise this imprint of the worker, modifying it to meet the unifying aims of the dominant classes.

The beginning and ending points of historical eras are times of the rampant development of perspectives, in which the triumphant force can look at itself as an active builder of the circumstances that later, once the outer layer of the fire has cooled down, will make people what they are in their daily lives. April 1952, seen in terms of its effect on the social structure, was a revolutionary event because it radically transformed the situation of the social classes: it destroyed some, raised others to the top, improved the situation of others, and, as a result, the material features of the socioeconomic order were reconfigured both in form and content. Seen from the perspective of the history of the subaltern classes, they transformed their status of traditional domination and successfully enforced a set of rights and resistance in the shaping of the new structural order of domination.

27. Foucault 2003.

In contrast, 1986 shows signs of another era. Seen in perspective, the march was the collapse of the boundaries established by the popular classes during the previous period. The dominant classes preserved their power, extending it into administrative terrains that were previously inaccessible due to the workers' resistance. In this sense, the march was a conservative act, but one of *displacement*; that is, it was a transformative event that renewed, in new forms, the exercise of social power by the old dominant classes, or, at least, the most important segment of them. The dominated classes' conditions of existence were revolutionised, but within the same general framework as their earlier domination. Even worse, it was a time of the loss of rights, of regression in their autonomous faculties and ability to make demands. It was a reactionary change that undid advances in their democratic right to intervene in state-affairs in a corporatist fashion. It eroded their organisational capacities, technically and materially fragmented their historical unity, and destroyed large pieces of collective memory, and so on.

From the perspective of the old mining proletariat, in contrast, it was the death of their culture, understood as the end of their leadership role in history, at least for several decades. It was the death of their historical initiative, of their class-certainties, even though their physical extinction would take fourteen more years, until 2000, when Huanuni and Colquiri were privatised.

What is terrible about this foundational moment is that, unlike in 1952, when each of the oppositional forces knew or sensed why they were taking to the streets, willing to risk their lives in the pursuit of their most essential interests, then at stake, in 1986 only one of the forces, the dominant one, thoroughly understood the importance of the event that was about to occur. This is why it came to the highway in combat-gear with the army and a general staff combining business-people and ministers. In preparation, the governing classes had already waged an effective symbolic battle for forms of legitimate enunciation: they stigmatised the workers' action as anti-democratic, spoke of the COMIBOL miners as a 'burden' on the state and on taxpayers, stoked small urban landowners' fears over the diabolic arrogance of the miners, and when the march spilled over the police security-barriers in Caracollo, a large-scale military conspiracy was set in motion.

At first, the miners responded to these preparations for imminent war – which foreshadowed the undemocratic restructuring of the relationship between capital and labour, between the citizenry and the state – with a call to restore the social stratification put in place thirty-five years earlier. Thus, they entered a war without knowing it, or at least without wanting to recognise it as such. The 'we will be back, but armed' with which they left La Paz in March 1985 – a clear

premonition of the irreversible petrification of the balance of forces that had sustained the nationalist state – never materialised.

The problem, in August 1986, was not that there were no weapons; there are never weapons for the hostile masses, and social rebellion is, in fact, the best way to acquire them. What revealed the defection of labour, in this case, was that the miners did not see themselves as an army, and nor did they want to be an army in the heat of the battle. All they were asking for was for their old rights to be respected, for the old pacts to be re-established! Their disarming was, therefore, above all else spiritual, and as long as this remained the case, there was no possibility of their being armed materially.

As the march advanced, the highway filled up with more miners with blankets, with more disbelief in the governmental measures shutting down operations, and with more respectful demands. However, the script of history had not yet been written. The human support that sheltered the marching miners from town to town, the Aymara communities in the *altiplano*, the poor in El Alto – they could feel what was happening and they started to act accordingly. Thousands of communards, of astounded students, came out to greet and to feed those that they inevitably considered to be an army. They received them as they would receive those about to fearlessly defy death. Every town the miners passed through celebrated these ‘crazy *collas*’ with music, ritual and a variety of food placed along all four sides of the plazas. In practice, the unfortunate rift between miners and communards that had continually fractured the actions of the popular classes began to mend.

As their march moved forward, the miners themselves started to be imbued with the fiery mood as they neared La Paz. In Patacamaya, in a large assembly similar to those held every day in the town that was sheltering them for the night, a proposal emerged from amongst the marchers to climb atop the trucks and make it to the city as quickly as possible. Some union-leaders and mining activists had already taken the precaution of bringing dynamite from the mines, along with other provisions. Groups of militants from what would later become the *Ejército guerrillero Tupac Katari* (‘Tupac Katari Guerrilla Army’, EGTK) had started to gather dozens of long-range firearms in the Aymara communities alongside the miners’ route. Other workers suggested leaving the highway and walking at night in order to elude the imminent repression, and more than a thousand miners went ahead to Villa Remedios, staying outside the reach of the troops that would surround the largest group of marchers in Calamarca.

A new mood began to take shape, with greater insight into the signs of the era. This was not just another march; it was a resolute bid to deploy the social forces strategically. Different speakers at the assembly argued: ‘we should not march unarmed, repression is imminent’; ‘we have to get to El Alto today, as the

government won't allow us to make it there'; 'we have to get to El Alto so that we can go down to La Paz with the thousands of inhabitants that are waiting for us'. And, certainly, the poor population of El Alto, like the factory-workers, teachers and union-activists, had already begun preparing to triumphantly welcome these courageous marchers and join the mobilisation in confrontation with the government. The presence of miners was like the sign with which all the individually tolerated discomforts, all the received and silenced contempt, would flow into a flood of outrage and resistance capable of collective action. There was a need for someone in whom to trust; there is always a need for someone in whom to trust, someone who can transform the material and organisational weakness of the subaltern into an ability to advance a common autonomous action. In the end, this never arrived. Indeed, it still has not: hence the scarce public morality of this era.

What was more powerful than all this was the demagogy of a handful of union-leaders lacking in brilliance, lacking courage, lacking political insight, captivated by the appeal of their parliamentary salaries and dwarfed by the era-defining significance of the movement's leadership and the march. They only managed to demonstrate a fatal obedience to the traditional rules of the game followed by previous rulers: mobilising in order to negotiate, stirring up fervour as to then have better conditions for haggling on the market of rights and concessions.²⁸ They did not understand – they still have not understood – that the march was the foreshadowing of the end of an era, the extinction of the marketplace for negotiation between the union and the state. They – along with their old Trotskyist rivals, who encouraged a struggle for supplementary benefits for pensioners – are most responsible for the death of the mining proletariat as it had existed since 1940.

In Patacamaya, events began to take on a hectic pace. There were rumours of repression, more deliberative assemblies, discussions about whether they should start a hunger-strike as they arrived in La Paz, suggestions of fighting and resisting repression, and the transfer of more arms and activists from Cochabamba and Potosí to join the march. In the middle of it all, there was the conciliatory discourse of the union-leadership, who, strangely, had not yet been replaced by a strike-committee, as had always been the case in previous situations like this. One of them, a delegate, took a risk and vouched for the ministers' promise to let the march into La Paz. Twenty-four hours later, this tearful man would be spat at by the mining women, coming to understand the paralysing betrayal only too late.

28. Thompson 1979.

The union-leadership's official line would end up setting the stage for defeat. It is true, they were not 'the guilty ones', to the extent that the outcome of class-struggles does not depend on the astuteness or courage of a good or bad organic leader. There was already a long-standing predisposition that over the years and days had created the miners' troubles and their historical powerlessness to look beyond the nationalist horizon; the few openings through which different possibilities for the future could be glimpsed were just that – limited and tenuous glimmers of alternatives amidst a morass of complacency with respect to the established order. Nonetheless, these leaders and parties did nothing to cultivate these glimmers of autonomy and alternative strategic possibilities. On the contrary, when they could, they blocked these possibilities and engaged in praising the already extensive collective conservatism and class-subservience, which was central to preserving their privileges and their personal upward mobility.

Calamarca would be the site of enclosure, of military defeat and of the historic defeat of the old working-class structure that had prevailed throughout the twentieth century in Bolivia. On 28 August, the whole country was declared to be in a state of siege, and in Calamarca entire regiments of soldiers and police officers, tanks, planes and an unprecedented military deployment of infantry and artillery troops surrounded the workers and their families.

The generals laughed: it was the ultimate revenge for their April 1952 embarrassment, when they had had to march in a procession with their rumpled uniforms beneath the stern gaze of the victorious, armed miners. The miners now lamented their powerlessness: it was a resounding strategic defeat. Until then, the mining proletariat had been the very essence of the era; their work sustained it, their struggles guaranteed it. Their dreams were the most remarkable productive force that underpinned it. The final collapse of this era, with the fracturing of the way that productive labour had been performed, of how the material and symbolic condition of the working class had been formed, began in Calamarca.

Not a single shot was necessary to secure their downfall: so great was the enemy's military superiority, so great was the miners' spiritual defencelessness, so great was the absence of a collective imaginary of a social order that went beyond the nationalist state, the nationalisation of productive enterprises and the inclusive pacts that had guaranteed their rule. There was no longer any need for any deaths to ratify the catastrophe and their downfall in the face of the historical initiative that the governing classes were once again beginning to take.

Could they have tried to break the siege? Perhaps. At least that is what the mining women proposed, not resigning themselves to a return to the silent death of abandoned camps. They were born and raised in an atmosphere of assemblies and shared struggles that defended dignified labour and food for their children; they had not given up before, and they did not easily agree to do so now,

especially when what they expected upon their return was the extinction of their world, of their history.

Perhaps an attempt to break the siege would have changed the subsequent misery of the mining families. Perhaps shedding blood would have left the easy and unequivocal political victory of the rulers incomplete. In general, blood and death in popular myths leave an unsettled debt that future generations must redress; they are a call to pursue an active reconciliation that can fulfil the need for restitution, for a symbolic compensation for the sacrifice of a life that could have been one's own. Deaths fulfil the role of the third inclusive party, of the unifying externality, of the bloodline that expands symbolic kinship, membership and adherence to a genealogy remembered in the narrative of the martyrs. Perhaps, with deaths, the subsequent era would not have been as unfocused and dispassionate as it is today. What is certain is that the siege and the surrender without a fight left a lasting mark on the cultural mood of the decades that followed. The workers would bid an embittered and washed out farewell to history. In the *altiplano*, surrounded by soldiers, they would climb on to the trains without anyone to send them off. There would be no dynamite-explosions nor any proud faces of those who took risks to salute death. The miners had a defeated look, and it was without glory that they said goodbye to the country and the society they had so loved, to which they had given all of their labour in order to lift it out of the quagmire of embarrassing insignificance and fear.

In Calamarca, the working-class condition, laboriously created over a period of fifty years, would be shattered like a glass tossed onto the pavement. In the process, a different world of labour would be born, even today equally marked by atomisation, by the hybridity of its geographic settlements, by the thinness of its beliefs, by its lack of confidence and collective ties.

As of that moment, and for more than a decade, their class-history was shattered before the astounded gaze of the workers – workers who then only experienced fragmented pieces of life, temporary passages through workplaces which they knew they could not lay down their future in, because the future had become an intractable question. Time started to lose its homogeneity and split into several densities, corresponding to the various geographies in which new workers had to perform their occupational roles.

This material reconfiguration of the world of labour has put an end to a certain type of working-class identity and a certain material structure of waged labour, giving way to the rise of a new material and symbolic structure of the working-class condition, which is only beginning to develop a new way of presenting itself, of imagining its role in history, of politically organising and expressing itself.

To a large extent, it is a matter of workers much more numerous than two decades ago, distributed across increasingly more varied branches of productive

activity,²⁹ but fragmented in medium-sized industrial workplaces, in small subcontracted factories, in home-based jobs whose geographical arrangement crushes any possibility of meeting in large groups. Workers generally lack fixed contracts and, as a result, nomadically move from one trade to another, combining the sale of their labour-power in the form of products or freelance services with the sale of their labour-power in the form of time, for a wage. The few that do have fixed contracts have lost the opportunity for gradual promotions based on seniority and are compelled to compete internally for promotions based on ability, apprenticeships, subservience and occupational multifunctionality. For the most part, they are young workers, disciplined in urban individualism by the school, the family and the mass media. Unlike the old workers, forged in a spirit of unionism as a guarantee of rights and social mobility, young mining, manufacturing, construction- and oil-workers cannot count on a future of predictable work-patterns, geographic stability and union-experience, which creates enormous difficulties for the development of a solid culture of unity and social purpose.

Nonetheless, and despite all these weighty structuring factors that favour a hasty articulation of what a new labour-movement and a new working-class identity might be, fourteen years after that ill-fated march, proletarians forged in the old culture of working-class belonging but with insightful understandings of the new, fragmented material and symbolic reality of the modern working-class condition have introduced organisational forms such as the *Coordinadora del Agua y la Vida de Cochabamba* ('Cochabamba Coalition in Defence of Water and Life').

As a result of their victories – the strength of their combination of diverse occupational sectors, their building solidarity around a working-class moral authority, the recovery of the subaltern classes' ability to believe in themselves, and, above all, because of the 'recovery of the capacity to act' and the creation of the possibility of self-determining action – these organisational forms are giving rise to a novel reconstitution of the social fabric of the world of labour, and particularly of contemporary working-class identity. As of April 2000, we find ourselves at a *historical turning point*: that of the beginning of the end of the era marked by the neoliberal programme that was launched with the defeat of the 'March for Life'.

29. On the new working-class condition in Bolivia, see García Linera 2000c.

IV. The Indigenous Movement

The Colonial Narrative and the Communal Narrative¹

Indigenous people have the same experience with respect to official society as death has with respect to those who cling to life: both are in a position where their very existence is denied. Just as life is the permanent flight from death, in our countries, the 'social' is the perpetual exclusion of the 'Indian' from the public system. Progress is the extermination of the Indian, or the Indian's taming by means of citizenship, and even then, once converted into a nomadic semi-proletariat, any inkling of Indianness is the object of renewed social inquiry and deferral. Modernity is the ecstatic holocaust of indigenous rationality, even though what comes to replace this rationality is a crude imitation of the industrial Westerner's unattainable concerns; nationality is the eradication of collective identities irreducible to the abstraction of the state, while difference is the paternalist folklorisation of the distinctions made by civilisers.

This horrific portrayal of the so-called indigenous world is so internalised that even those who embody it retreat aghast, when they can, in search of redemption from the regulations that enslave them. According to state-rationality, then, the Indian is a social disease disdainfully being eradicated; the Indian is the death of the historical sense of what is valid.

And yet, everything sprouts from and inevitably returns to the Indian: wealth, power, colonialism and the republic are different names given to the confiscation of the creative powers that emanate from Indian muscles and minds. In this productive

1. Text extracted from García Linera 1998a.

irresistibility lies the tragedy of the Indian's historical extortion, systematically renewed for the sake of Christianisation, patriotism, the peasantry, citizenship or multi-ethnicity; in this sense, colonialism can be considered the fundamental alienation of the future of contemporary society, to the extent that it foreshadows the transformation of the Indian's vital potentials into separate and then alien forces, which are then turned against Indians in order to domesticate and subjugate them. Interestingly, the poorly named 'revolutionary' projects of the last century, far from opposing this devastating endeavour, have proved to be its surprisingly effective accomplices.

State-nationalism

Though it is true that the colonial élites, who endured even with the formation of the republic, never abandoned – and when possible, implemented – their heartfelt desire for the physical extermination of the indigenous population, it is nationalist discourse that has caused the greatest destruction of the material and spiritual continuity of collective indigenous entities.

Professing an extraordinary, popular, anti-oligarchic predisposition, the nationalist state consolidated the centralised delegation of public sovereignties to a team of professional governmental officials, which ultimately turned out to be the most successful such arrangement in the last several centuries. In order for this subservience to work, to capture not the people's bodies but their souls, something much more powerful was needed than the power that could satiate the hunger for land caused by the monopoly of the *haciendas*, and something much more persuasive was needed than the control of monetary resources able to corrupt popular loyalties such that they would support an extravagant state. What was needed, above all, was the homogenisation of the people's sense of their imagined social totality. This was absolutely necessary for material and symbolic reproduction, and it enabled the possibility of a general abdication of public prerogatives, leaving them in the hands of a group of permanent specialists. And what could be better for this Taylorisation of the social spirit than compulsory equality by means of private property, the law, universal schooling, military service and all the other technologies of state-based citizenship-formation, which started to work precisely when the smoke from the April insurrection began to dissipate?

With the construction of the abstract or unionised individual as the form of state-recognised citizenship, the state, more than serving as an emblem for the nation, emerges as the nationalisation of the population itself, bound by the territorial confines of its influence. Everything that opposes this flattening homogenisation of diversity is correspondingly labelled as unpatriotic, communist, subversive, uncivilised.

The tax-régime of the colonial state was thus split into cultural and moral realities, which had to be offered up daily on the altar of an educational, military, legislative and informational bureaucracy that patrolled the conscience of the new citizen. From Mexico to Argentina, from Brazil to Colombia, from Cuba to Bolivia, the so-called national state has represented the mass production of this anonymous social specimen called the civilised citizen, holder of similar ambitions and common hardships. This citizen's authentic personality is the state. Even worse, this citizen's personality is the name of the state that appears in maps, or else the sum of unreliable benefits conferred by membership of the state, privileges that it can flaunt in order to set it apart from more unfortunate neighbouring countries.

In every case, the nation-of-the-state, busily pursued by the market-élites over the last century, has consolidated the most systematic and fierce attempt to eradicate indigenous social identities. Along with politico-cultural disciplining – called upon to 'incorporate' into the 'nation' and the 'culture' those subjects that supposedly lack these elements – the market, money and lasting employment have been proposed as methods for pulling the Indian away from a primitivism supposedly set in stone in the agrarian community. The nation, espoused by bold, urban professionals, has, therefore, been nothing but an excuse for the forcible breaking of the urban and suburban populations from their communities and their passive encapsulation in an abstract community, distinguished by the false equality of civil rights among people who are in fact deeply differentiated economically, culturally and historically.

In most countries, this decapitating of social realities with different ethno-cultural and productive-organisational content has been concluded, or there is not much farther to go. As the old and new 'revolutionary nationalists' revive the momentum for this modern crusade, they present indigenous reservations as anthropological traits toward which the philanthropic or touristic tendencies of the more sensitive components of 'national society' can be directed.

However, there are countries where this social levelling, even in its resolution, is deliberately reproduced in this same state of suspension. But this is not only because of what some currents of thought have defined as the invincible resistance of groups called 'indigenous', or because of the governing élites' reproachable strategic wretchedness. Surely, this partial destructuring of the 'indigenous' material identity has to do with the ongoing density of communal forms and with the fallacy of the state's homogenising plan. But also – and this is one of the paradoxes of merely local resistance to colonial plunder – because it is in the hierarchical simultaneity of different productive and organisational forms that commercial, industrial and financial capital can formally subordinate an abundant set of technologies, cultural loyalties, and non-capitalist productive capacities to the process of forced monetisation and to the subsequent valorisation

of social capital as a whole, without any need for large investments,. Paradoxically, it is a circuit of monetisation and capitalisation that is also actively implemented by the same subaltern urban-rural strata that reproduce amongst themselves, one against the other, the same mechanisms of extortion that they withstand from the governing élites, thus increasing their vulnerability to them even further.

Self-employment, temporary migration to precarious jobs, the growing commodification of family-communal resources that shrink but do not disappear – these are the tortuous routes by which this form of indirect expropriation of indigenous labour is deployed. The transformation of these old forms of capital-accumulation into an explicit programme of ‘modernisation’ is what, in terms of the consumption of labour-capacity, has come to be called neoliberalism. The multiculturalisms and multiethnicisms today used by the children of state-nationalism to put a gloss on their rhetoric, far from overcoming nationalist serialisation, instead compensate for its frustrations. The ‘cultural tolerance’ they call upon is just the discursive legitimisation of the neototalitarianism of capital, nourished by the distortions of partially reconstituted, fragmented communal rationalities. From the point of view of these rationalities, the cultural and political differentiations intentionally encouraged by the state form part of the staggered and occasionally frozen rhythms of the subsumption of production to capital.

State-socialism

If ‘revolutionary nationalism’ was presented as the bureaucratic consciousness of the state, then leftism with Marxist pretensions was presented as the theologisation of state-reason.

With notable, abruptly censored exceptions, the Marxist vulgate was introduced to the continent as a crude governmental apologia. A radical and ruthless critique of the present – an essential feature of serious Marxism – was replaced, in the 1930s, with the sacralisation of a ‘party’ and a paranoid state that believed themselves to be the bearers of an inescapable blueprint for the development of history. While the former thought that it protected society’s emancipated consciousness, in line with the conspiratorial view of its members, and its slogans predicted the coming of the new world, the latter embodied the effectiveness of a revelation. The almighty state, whose omnipresence in every corner of society supposedly marked the consummation of the redeeming revolution, had its clergy in these parties, charged with declaring and leading the new society. Secular faith in the programme divided the world into believers and sinners, the latter being susceptible to conversion by means of the parochial cult of professed militancy.

These politics, carried out as if they were monastic doctrine, inevitably resulted in the deification of hierarchies playing the ventriloquist, claiming to speak on behalf of the people and to take their mandate from them – in this case, on behalf of the proletariat and the common people. Bread must be given to the hungry? Water must be given to the thirsty? The sick must be cured? The unemployed must be given work? Land must be given to the landless? The oppressed must be liberated? Of course, they respond. And who better for such a noble task than the supposed ‘socialist state’, which knows what the mob of unenlightened hungry people need.

But if food, drink and work must be *given*, the apostles of this enterprise must first have the loaves of bread to be distributed and the wine to be shared. The national-popular state, ‘workers’ state’, or whatever it is called, but a state nonetheless, is precisely the centralised control of wealth in the hands of a self-designated benevolent vanguard, which gives to all in the name of all. If in the past small local capital cowered behind the nation, now the greed of incorrigible bureaucrats is hidden behind the phantom of revolution, as they hope to cast their private interests as collective ones.

Is it that the nationalisation of production, of wealth, of life, which leftist thinking so yearns for, breaks with what nationalists, republicans and realists have so firmly established, century after century? Not at all. They just bring what their predecessors initiated to a higher level. In Absolute State-Capitalism, falsely called ‘socialism’ (for example, the former Soviet Union), capitalism’s classic free labour-market is transformed into an over-accumulation of workers in irrelevant trades, competing amongst themselves before the company-directors bureaucratically appointed by the ‘party’. The Owner-State promotes the market-notion of the equivalence of labour-power to a quantity of objectified abstract labour, held up as the symbolic general equivalent of the abstraction of the various different concrete labours. In state-capitalism, the tyranny of the owners in the labour-process of ‘free enterprise’ is replaced by the despotism of the bureaucrat, which reproduces what the company requires of the worker. In this supposed ‘socialism’, competition between companies takes the form of competition for material and human resources between different productive branches, while state-property, instead of eradicating top-down leadership and the use of technology as a means to exploit and suppress the autonomy of labour in production, intensifies them and brings them together as a resource for bureaucratic planning agencies.

The nationalisation of society, which delighted a certain type of leftist over the last century, replaced the valorisation of value as the personal goal of employers-owners with the same project, only now pursued as a centralised strategy by public authorities. The alleged ‘socialism’ they called for really just concealed

a state-capitalism and a political corollary that worshipped the state and any practice that revered it. Politics, since then and until now, has been deformed into an evangelical quarrel, with handfuls of government officials fighting over their right to public office.

Thus, while for the officials in office, doing politics means rotating through ministries, occupying governmental offices and winning seats, for proto-officials, who identify themselves as on the Left while they sit in the waiting room, politics is holding leadership-roles in the unions, student-associations and, if possible, a seat on a town-council or, at least, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), in order to 'launch themselves' from there.

The difference between them is just one of degree; they all unscrupulously display their obsession with substituting for the masses, with representation in perpetuity, with the reification of the hierarchy. Politics, here, is the enjoyment of the benefits of people's voluntary subservience to the institutionalised hierarchies that monopolise authority, the public voice, and governing. It is not by chance that this poorly named Left, which worships the state, has obstinately advocated the market-abstraction of individuals as a form of making them prisoners of general state-representation, and the abandonment of the indigenous world as a source of different forms of social cohesion.

In order for the cohesion of the people to develop by means of the abstract equality of the citizen, it is necessary for capital, with its commodification taking over the people's productive and inventive activities, and for the state, with its civic discipline, to abolish the substance of other forms of reproductive group-identity, founded in people's most sensitive, mythical and communitarian capabilities. Only then can the capitulation of individual wills to the abyss of a general autonomised will take on a self-endowed technological reality. The agrarian agenda has been precisely to meet this objective, and, as of recently, it has also been the leftist 'ethno-cultural' agenda, in both its radical and reformist versions. The proposal to make people into peasants, workers and for their collectivisation not only reflects this unhealthy tendency to convert into natural law what was, in other parts of the world, an exceptional historical contingency, but, above all, it testifies to an undeniable aversion to alien communal rationalities that do not recognise them as the absolute rulers of public power.

With the exception of José Carlos Mariátegui in Peru, who saw the community as a cooperative force, but not as a tool for large-scale political organisation; of Jorge Ovando Sáenz, who saw in indigenous autonomy an easier form of nationalisable citizenship-formation, but not a seed of social cohesion outside the state and capital; and of René Zavaleta, who was aware of the constitution of a national indigenous intersubjectivity outside of real subsumption, though with an unfortunate future given the expansion of the market-value régime; a

faintly socialist thought was advanced as the most coherent measure promoting the homogenisation of indigenous people, no longer based on the *mestizo*-voter model of nationalism, but on the disciplined waged labour that complemented this model.

The condescending attention that the Left awarded to the indigenous movements, from time to time, was never free of a clientelist zeal copied from the nationalists, as well as being marked by a gracious paternalism, similar to that of the Bolivarian armies on the way to the liberated cities. Just as the latter saw the Indians as *quépiris*² on account of their food and as decoration of the landscape along the side of the roads, vanguardism needed to be hoisted atop the Indians' shoulders in their victorious entry into the Palacio Quemado.

Leftists' *gamonalismo*³ is, therefore, not an epithet, but rather an implicit component of their unrestrained zeal to take over the guardianship of the Indians and workers, whose revolutionary consciousness they have always doubted, just as their Spanish predecessors doubted whether the Indians had a soul. Despite all the time that has passed, this colonial prejudice has not died out, not even in the Left's hangover after the fall of the Berlin Wall. All the chatter about 'first nations', meant to spruce up the crumbling nationalising litanies, is overcome by the overbearing need for a 'Bolivian' patronage of the small, little second-class nations – a patronage that can grant controlled autonomies in doses that will not challenge 'national unity'. 'Indigenous' culture and niches are recognised inasmuch as this recognition allows the manipulation of symbols likely to capture votes come election-time. Indeed, even the most indigenist variants of state-socialism can be seen as a rationalisation of the political and mental structures engendered by colonisation, or as a renewed neutralisation of indigenous demands manifested in recent decades.

The indigenous movement

From Katari to the Willcas of the nineteenth century; from the Qullasuyu republic to the Ayopaya rebels in 1949; from the stoning of Barrientos in Omasuyus to the highway-blockades of 1979; from the self-defence committees in Chapare to the final Aymara communal onslaught in September, there is a common backdrop that brings together eras and places to highlight the changing – but also persistent and unyielding – concrete meaning of what is called 'the indigenous'.

That the majority of these social movements, which threatened the foundations of the *colonial and republican order of the state*, have not used written narration

2. Baggage-carriers, whose name comes from the load that they carried on their backs (editor's note).

3. The exploitation of indigenous people by major landowners (editor's note).

to validate the radicalism of their objectives implies that authentic communal and plebeian insurgencies do not necessarily need the written word in order to rise up and clearly present proposals that subvert the reigning social order. This is even more the case when it is an agenda of social renewal that, instead of coming from a virtuous minority, comes from illiterate populations that have designed other, more eloquent means of communication, such as the spoken word, the deed of rebellion, weaving, ritual, sacrifice, symbolic performance and the language of events. However, this does not deny the fact that the written word can be part of the means of disseminating social projects, such as, for example, when Julián Apaza summoned the Tiquina communities to join the rebellion by reading a letter. Nor does it deny that reflection preserved on paper can help to fan the flames of practical memory, as was the case with the Indianist texts of the 1970s, which encouraged a wave of leaders to understand and to specify the deep significance of the Aymara-Quechua indigenous dissidence that was revitalised during that period.

Just as the lack of written narrative does not prevent us from affirming the existence of a plan of historical action alternative to the one that currently prevails, merely presenting demands to the state by means of a social action is not sufficient for us to speak of the emergence of a proposal for overcoming the current order. For example, the indigenous march from the east in 1992, the self-sacrificing trek that contested state-rule, did not criticise the presence of the state, but rather its absence among a portion of the population and territory within the scope of its authority. What they were proposing was a challenge to the economy of rights and concessions, demanding to be incorporated into a national identity that had forgotten them. The significance of this act lies in the fact that they took on a leading role in their gradual incorporation into the state; their limitation, in contrast, came from the voluntary abdication of their autonomy on the altars of state-jurisdiction and of the imagined, unstoppable superiority of the market-economy.

In contrast, with the ambiguity that characterises all autonomous actions by the subaltern, along with the demand to be included in the official citizenry and in the rights recognised by the state, the Aymara-Quechua indigenous movement has been endlessly deploying a set of proposal-developing mechanisms that do not ask for anything from anyone. It assumes that *what one is*, is what *one should be*, above and beyond what the official, dominant society would like one to be. Thus, it is not strange that the indulgent concession of 'ethnic territories' does not come even close to the places where those who have such a self-determining drive actually reside.

In one way or another, Indianism-Katarism – in its different political, cultural, academic, festive, armed, electoral and trade-union variants, sometimes

at the level of enlightened élites, but directly tied to the flows of communal passions – has reflected the tension of these tendencies towards inclusion and rupture nested in the everyday life of the indigenous multitude. However, it would seem that with time, these forces tend to become polarised, not with respect to the demographic groups that opt for one option or another, but rather in terms of the organisational methods for carrying them out.

Previously, petitioning and the demand for inclusion in the civic sphere were led by indigenous élites strongly tied to communal and trade-union organisations that formed a part of the identity that they wished to integrate into the state-configuration, as a reflection of the authentic democratisation of public power. Now, it turns out that the possibility of any type of indigenous integration will come with a stamp of silent obedience, of the acceptance of individualised atomisation and a prior cultural desertion. Of course, now there are local municipalities that supposedly decentralise ‘politics’ in rural areas, but only such that it can be mediated in a clientelist fashion by the legal parties, which have become the only recognised path of citizenship-formation or of the exercise of local and national public rights, in contrast with community- and assembly-forms. There are cantonal surveillance-committees, but they only meet the need for social oversight as powerless observers, monitoring the extravagance of a fraternity of *mistis*⁴ that grant *pasanaku*⁵ to the town-councillors. Uninominal seats, in turn, dodge the communities’ demands for direct participation in the development and control of a political power that insistently claims to speak for all.

Thus, the incorporation of the indigenous into an official citizenry has recently been consolidated, with new means of crippling the communal political commitment with which the ‘pactist’ currents of Indianism-Katarism had hoped to enter the public space. At the same time, a significant part of these native élites have been incorporated. These élites have not at all hesitated to ‘democratically’ join the state’s inquisitorial mechanisms, charged with modern cultural domestication. Their inflamed ethnicist discourse of previous years is now largely confined to ministerial offices and electoral offerings.

Still, this ill-timed transformation of Indianists into office-indigenists, of Katarists into clerical workers, of communal *kuracas*⁶ into colonial chiefs, instead of solving the fundamental problem of the construction of an equal citizenry, has exacerbated it further. The mediators of this construction-process, who could have translated the collective indigenous demands into the political codes of the

4. *Mestizos* (editor’s note).

5. Temporary loan of money based on family- or social ties and affinities (editor’s note).

6. Highest community authorities in Quechua-speaking regions (editor’s note).

state, are no longer there. They have been corrupted and dragged along with the small group of exclusionists.

How, then, can this demand be upheld, when its ideologues are going about justifying neocolonial decrees and repression, or have been silenced with ministerial bribes? It is not by chance that, amid the passive tolerance of state-coercions, the limited outbursts that do challenge governmental arbitrariness are notably belligerent, disruptive and openly infringe upon the normality thus far tolerated. Whether it is the Quechua-speaking communities in the north, Potosí and Sucre with blockades, or the Aymaras in the *altiplano* occupying highways and the city of La Paz, these actions share a subtle but growing irreconcilability with the state, with the urban world that scorns them and with *q'ara* power. It suggests a potentially tragic irreconcilability in the future, if things continue as they are. Indeed, if it makes any sense at all to speak about an indigenous movement in Chiapas, Guatemala, Ayacucho and the Andean region in Bolivia, it is precisely because of the mark left on society by moments of mass indigenous-communal excess in opposition to the dominant authorities.

Community and rebellion

To speak of an indigenous movement and its proposals requires that we go beyond the sordid, urban privileges that certain leadership-strata achieve. In fact, it demands that we go beyond the weak written translation that modern chroniclers use to try to portray indigenous people's capacity to make proposals. I include, here, both historians with native backgrounds as well as Indianist publications.

It is essential to understand the programmatic vehemence of the communal association, reinvented daily, and the terrible language of common action. To be sure, this can be considered a 'methodological' approach, which focuses on the exuberance of the proposals expressed by the 'indigenous movement', not on the discursive subtleties of what is said or written, but on the indomitable character of direct action, with no other mediation than the commitment and will put into play. We, therefore, postulate the community and its rebellion as a basis for illuminating that which is called 'indigenous'.

After all, what is it that allows us to refer to the 'indigenous' as a provisional social category of undeniable political and explanatory consequence, if not the 'actually existing' community? It is the reality of the community, at once resisting and withdrawing, that defines the 'indigenous' in its power and its weakness. What is more, the fact that the indigenous are not just a rural issue, but one that also includes concentric rings of urban areas and their trades, finds its explanation in the expansive force of the agrarian community, in its ability to partially

reconstruct itself in other social fields. Correspondingly, there is an 'indigenous problem' for the state in those places where there are components of community. Without the community, the indigenous becomes an issue of suburban marginality or peasant-grievances.

So what is this community, capable of creating a social movement with such momentum? Setting aside sociological explanations and the abundance of local variations, it is form of socialisation of people and of nature; a form of producing wealth and of conceptualising it; a way of representing material assets and of consuming them; a productive technology and religiousness, a form of the individual confronted with the common; a way of trading what is produced, but also of subordinating it to meet personal consumption-needs; an ethic and a form of politicising life; a way of explaining the world. Ultimately, it is a basic form of humanisation, of a different kind of social reproduction, and, in a significant sense, it is antithetical to the form of socialisation that comes with the régime of capital. However, at the same time – and we must not deny this – it is a form of fragmented socialisation, subjugated by external and internal powers, that position it as a tangible, subordinated reality. The community personifies a contradictory rationality, different from that of market-value, but formally subsumed to it for centuries. This means that, in its fundamental autonomy with respect to capital, and based on the procedural technical system of immediate labour, it is systematically deformed, distorted and modified by the demands of accumulation, first of commercial capital and then of industrial capital.

The history of the community, of the changes it has undergone, is undoubtedly the whole of this shameless war between two civilising logics and the persistence of the comunards themselves to stay the path of this firestorm. Thus it is impossible to understand the development of the great protagonism of 'indigenous' struggles in isolation from the campaigns of economic and political exaction launched by the state against their scattered communities.

The community, therefore, bears the stamp of subalternity with which it has been cornered and from which it has not yet been able to free itself. Similarly, the various types of intra-communal unity, whether in the form of resistance to state-impositions or of demands stemming from its exclusions, bear the load of this colonial subordination, which, paradoxically, is renewed with resistance and demands. The *caciques apoderados* movement in the early decades of the twentieth century and the movement for new agrarian laws beginning in 1984 demonstrate that there are challenges to the state that are, at the same time, its validation; that is, they uphold the idea of a state that has the right to make decisions about everyone's fate, but must heed the demands that the ruled ask it to consider. Here, the urgent request is an extreme radicalisation of accepted obedience. Whether as renewed fears, as self-deprecation, or as factionalism and

localism, the subordinations that have been agreed to and internalised condition communal acts of resistance against the rulers: in this sense, it is, to some extent, no strange thing that prominent individuals in these struggles suddenly prefer to offload the suffering they had thus far endured onto their own people, making them conscious accomplices to state-abuses. The strength of the production of subalternity is so overwhelming that it is even internalised in the reproductive and imaginative structures of the communities' family-units. Overcoming this subalternity is thus a question both of moral transgression and productive revolutionising.

Precisely this is rebellion. It is in rebellion that Guamán Poma's and Hegel's catastrophic assertion of the 'world turned upside-down' holds true. With communal rebellion, the entire past becomes actively concentrated in the present, but unlike in times of quiet, when the subaltern past is projected as the subalternised present, now it is the accumulation of the rebellious past that is concentrated in the present in order to overcome past docility. It is, therefore, a time of explosive rupture with all the previous principles of subservient behaviour, including those that have endured within the family-unit. The future is seen, at last, as the extraordinary invention of a common will that flees without shame from all prescribed routes, recognising itself in this audacity as its own sovereign maker. The reconstructive and inventive features of community, led by the men and women from the communities participating in the rebellion, are what we would now like to call the 'text' in which we can discover the indigenous movements' actual social programme.

Only when the community rises up can it actually abolish the fragmentation in which it is currently condemned to languish, reinstating the communal parameters of daily life as a point of departure for the development of a new autonomous social order. Thus, it is at these times that the communal-indigenous world covets itself as the origin and target of every power, every identity and every future incumbent upon it. Its acts are the tacit enunciation of a social order that does not recognise any type of foreign or external authority other than its own *self-determination already under way*. That this active form of constructing its common future vindicates both a different social-natural form of social reproduction (national-indigenous self-determination) and undertakes the refounding of life in a negotiated coalition with the urban masses (the national-popular) demands that we inquire into the different forms of the national constitution of societies. With respect to these alternatives, the modern national state is merely a substitutionist and tyrannical particularity of these energies.

With rebellion, as with the communal form of production, the community ceases to be catalogued as a relic of ancient times and presents itself anew as a rational foundation for a superior form of autonomously producing public life.

The community's politics ceases to be an 'ethnic' condiment for sweetening the local reign of liberal democracy, and it reveals itself as a potential to refound the entire state-régime.

Of course, the insubordinate community, more than advancing the exercise of a direct democracy that could complement representative democracy – as argued by a certain frustrated Left – proposes, in effect, the abolition of all forms of delegating power to institutionalised specialists. The contribution of the community in political practices is not exactly direct democracy, and nor does it stand in hopeless opposition to representative democracy; though it is true that the former is inseparable from communal practices, the latter occasionally allows the community to coordinate its criteria at a broader territorial and demographic scale. The authentic contribution of the rebellious community is the communally organised people's actual reappropriation of the rights, public powers, leadership-roles and use of legitimate force previously delegated to government-officials and specialists.

When the community rebels, it dissolves the time of challenges to the state with the practice of the events of its rebellion. At first, it takes back the legitimate use of public violence, thus far monopolised by the repressive bodies of the state. Then, the use of force emerges as a collective plebiscitary will exercised by all those who decide to do so, with the communities themselves – those that rise up as simultaneously deliberative and executive organs – as they engage in armed struggle, if they need to, as just one of the ethical-pedagogical activities that fulfil their agreed-upon decisions. The effect of coercion, under this new social form of its application, is no longer an arbitrary imposition applied to others. It is simply the protection of the agreement undertaken by the communal multitude as a whole.

Without a doubt, legality is thus turned completely upside-down. The judge, the court, the laws and all the institutional technologies – which enable the monopolisation of the social sense of justice by a staff of corporatist cadres at the service of the state – are deposed from their role as the bearers of recognisable legality. In their place, law becomes the collective decision of the uprising, and the moral norms guiding its applicability are channelled by the recommendations propagated by the most prestigious people, lacking any institutional authority.

In this ritualised challenge to disciplinary power, the communal-insurgent will, buoyed by old symbols that recall the imagined memory of old rights, is exercised as the sovereign foundation of all power. This is, therefore, a new form of feeling and producing social power, in which the people are the conscious subject creating their destiny, as tragic as this destiny might be. Meanwhile, old power, alienated in the form of the state, returns to the source from which it had

become autonomous: to simple people, of flesh and blood, creators of the world and of wealth, who once again take up their positions as the truly powerful. The de-alienation of political and economic power and moral and spiritual power is, therefore, the great lesson bestowed by the contemporary indigenous rebellions taking place on the continent in recent years.

The indigenous movement – if it has any remarkable characteristics, if events in Chiapas, the Aymara *altiplano* or Chapare hold any teachings or challenges – features this reinvention of politics as a reappropriation of all public powers by the actual communities themselves. Practising politics in this way constitutes a lethal blow to Capital's State and to all of its offspring, who, under their various ideologies, become professionalised in order to be able to administer it. Similarly, it is an invitation to a political rationality that does not delegate the will to create and to decide one's destiny to anyone else. On the contrary, it demands a common self-determination in every sphere of daily life, disobedience toward all disciplinary powers, whatever they may be, the autonomous fulfilment of unsatisfied needs, and the communication of this defiance amongst all those who practice it.

The current relevance of these practical reflections advanced by the indigenous rebellions lies in the fact that, in spite of what liberal lackeys may say, they highlight the discussion of critical advances beyond both the huge historical fraud mistakenly called 'actually existing socialism', and the academic illusion called 'the end of history'. At the same time, in light of the communal-indigenous rebellions, it becomes possible to join with other forms of insurgent communities of workers and of the urban masses, who for more than a hundred years have been fighting to find their own way, and without whose presence, communal indigenous life cannot flourish.

Indigenous Autonomies and the Multinational State¹

1. The exclusionary republic

When Bolivia became a republic, it inherited the colonial social structure. Land-distribution, social stratification, the tax-régime and even part of the civil service and the staff tasked with administering it did not undergo substantial changes, leaving intact the class-structures, powers, institutions and hierarchy of personnel created during the different stages of the colonial régime. In the process, perhaps the most enduring legacy was also conserved – the system of the dominant beliefs, prejudices and values that had determined collective behaviour before the independence-process: the racialisation of social differences by means of the state-invention of the ‘Indian’, not only as a category of taxpayers, but, above all, as the ‘negative other’ that organised the symbolic structures with which people, including the Indians themselves, made sense of the world.

The category of the ‘Indian’ was initially introduced by representatives of the Spanish monarchy for taxation and fiscal affairs. This classification, in addition to partially diluting other forms of native identification, established a division of labour and a ranking of types of knowledge and means of accessing trades, producing a complex structure of social class-formation. But, at the same time, and in order for this taxation to work, colonial rule constructed Indianness as a discourse and a prejudice that naturalised the structures of social domination, identifying it with those who are not

1. Text extracted from García Linera 2004a.

qualified, who must be ruled, educated, indoctrinated, led, governed and appeased. The stigmatisation of Indianness (which, in turn, has different levels of symbolic measure) naturalised practices of economic exclusion and legitimated the political and cultural monopolies on defining the rules of social competence, thereby contributing not only to a racialised expression of particular socio-economic conditions of exclusion and domination, but also to objectively constructing these socio-economic conditions.

The Indianisation of colonised society was produced by means of a series of components, which, at certain times and in particular contexts, demarcated the Indian, who had to pay taxes and be excluded from the higher levels of the colonial power. And – as clearly evidenced by the tax-records that show repeated visits to collect taxes as well as indigenous people's escape-strategies – place of residence, maternal language, occupation, surname, income, type of property, form of dress and even physical features were tied together in a flexible way in different periods in order to objectify the Indian, or to create distance from the Indian, as a subject of economic exactions and political exclusion. In this sense, Indian is neither a race nor a culture; but colonial rule systematically sought to racialise the Indian, because it had to somehow delimit the taxpaying and subordinate population. A *de facto* ethnicisation of this exploitation was, therefore, established. There are, then, three interconnected processes. The first, conquest, distinguishes between rulers and the ruled as a result of the confrontation between forces of political and state-apparatuses. The second, colonial rule, marks out the spaces of the division of labour and cultural, administrative and economic powers, based on a geographic, cultural, somatic and racial identification of the colonised. And, lastly, there is the legitimation and naturalisation of the system of domination, based on this culturalist, spatial and racial hierarchisation of the social order.

The Bolivian republic's foundation left intact these colonial structures, which conferred prestige, property and power as a function of skin-colour, surname, language and lineage. The liberator Simón Bolívar clearly distinguished between 'Bolivianness', assigned to all those who had been born under the territorial jurisdiction of the new republic, and 'citizens', who had to know how to read and write the dominant language (Spanish) and be free of bonds of servitude, ensuring that, right from the start, Indians lacked citizenship.² In a step backward even with respect to colonial rule, which had recognised the local role of indigenous forms of authority, Bolívar, attempting to establish a liberal constitution, declared the authority of the indigenous chiefs defunct, replacing them with local officials appointed by the state.³

2. Grüner 2000.

3. Simón Bolívar, 'Decreto del 4 de julio de 1825, Cuzco', cited in Sandoval Rodríguez 1991.

The different state-forms up to 1952 did not significantly alter this political *apartheid*. The *caudillo* state⁴ (1825–80) and the régime of so-called ‘censitary’ democracy (1880–1952),⁵ in both its liberal and its conservative periods, had modified the state’s political constitution many times (1826, 1831, 1834, 1839, 1843, 1851, 1861, 1868, 1871, 1878, 1880, 1938, 1945, 1947); however, politico-cultural exclusion was maintained both in state-legislation and in the people’s daily practices. Indeed, throughout this period, ethnic exclusion became the organising axis of the state’s cohesion.

In this entire period, the state did not even pretend to incorporate the Indians into state decision-making processes, although, incidentally, a large part of governmental expenses were financed with indigenous taxes, even in the early twentieth century.⁶ Here, citizenship, like power, legitimate property and culture, are rights not to be deliberated over, but rather to be exercised as categorical imperatives, because they are a type of right of conquest. Citizenship is not so much a production of rights as it is a family-inheritance; it was a type of patrimonial citizenship.

For more than a hundred years, the right to govern was manifested as a display of lineage; one does not become a citizen, one is born either citizen or Indian. It is a stigma of ancestry and pedigree. Patrimonial citizenship in the oligarchic state, more than a culture of public responsibility, is a pledge of loyalty to the perpetuity of the caste. It is, above all, showing off family-crests and the purity of the bloodline. Of course, this does not prevent the intrusion of social climbers who have been able to whiten their lineage in this inbred political space. This is the case with successful merchants, purchasers of communal lands and the offspring of oligarchic *encholamiento*⁷ who, nonetheless, possess a rather suspect citizenship, which must be negotiated by developing clientelist networks, showing off their money and abiding by the lifestyle of the traditional élites.

We can appreciate the extent to which the state’s limited ambition to expand its constituency was part of its structural logic by comparing the number of residents registered in the country with the number of voters participating in different elections. From 1880 to 1951, the number of voters – ‘citizens’ – varied between two and three percent of the total population inhabiting Bolivia.⁸

The processes of democratisation and cultural homogenisation that began in the wake of the 1952 Revolution partly changed the form of the oligarchic state’s régime of ethnic and cultural exclusion. Universal suffrage extended the right of political citizenship to millions of indigenous people previously deprived of any

4. Irurozqui 1994.

5. Mayorga 1999.

6. Viaña 2002; Rodríguez 1979.

7. Translators’ note: The union of white, oligarchic men and *mestizo* women.

8. Percentages calculated based on data provided by Irurozqui 1994.

input into state decision-making. Similarly, as free public education started to extend into rural areas, the indigenous people, who had constituted the overwhelming majority of 'illiterates' excluded from the body of state-knowledge, were able to gain more access to this knowledge, and some possibilities for social mobility emerged as academic cultural capital was accumulated. All these measures, along with the creation of a domestic market, the individualisation of agrarian property and the nationalisation of the main centres producing economic surplus, were clearly inscribed within a programme of nation-building⁹ led by the state.

However, the legitimate cultural knowledge acquired by indigenous groups was limited to the mandatory learning of a foreign language, Spanish, and of cultural norms produced and monopolised by *mestizo*-urban communities, once again setting in motion the mechanisms of ethnic exclusion, although now in a reformed and euphemistic fashion. Thus, from 1952 to 1976, the sixty to sixty five percent of the Bolivian population that spoke an indigenous language as their mother-tongue could only exercise their rights of citizenship in a foreign language, since official education, the university-system, and relations with the public administration and so on could only be conducted in Spanish, and not in Quechua or Aymara.

With the 1952 Revolution, Spanish became the only official language of the state, in effect devaluing the indigenous languages, which had no official recognition allowing for their acknowledgement as a legitimate language for engaging in public affairs, pursuing social mobility or gaining access to bureaucratic-administrative positions. Similarly, granting universal suffrage to the Indians imposed a single organisational framework for political rights – the liberal one – in a society with other traditional systems of political organisation and of selecting authorities, which were then swept aside, no longer considered to be efficient mechanisms for the exercise of political rights.

This linguistic and organisational homogenisation to which the indigenous peoples, who were bearers of other cultural knowledges and other systems of forming authority, were subjected, quickly gave way to the construction of a space of linguistic and organisational competence and accumulation regulated by the state, in which the indigenous people, now 'fellow peasants', were once again positioned at the bottom of the struggle to conquer legitimate political and academic knowledge. Obviously, if the only language considered by the state for the purpose of communicating about state-affairs is the mother-tongue of the *mestizo* élites, then those with a different mother-tongue who have to learn a second language, like the Indians, have to make a greater effort to access the

9. Translators' note: Original in English.

privileged sites that those with Spanish as a first language automatically occupy. Here, the linguistic combination and the weaknesses in the syntactic construction of Spanish, inevitably revealed by those with an indigenous language as their mother-tongue, is an easy way to identify, discipline and belittle indigenous efforts to master Spanish.

In this linguistic market, the top place, with access to decision-making positions in the state, is occupied by longstanding Spanish speakers, while the stigmatised group at the opposite end of the hierarchy is made up of those who only speak indigenous languages. In the middle, in a complex system of hierarchical rankings, are those who speak both Spanish and an indigenous language, but cannot write; immediately following them are those that do know how to write in Spanish, but cannot pronounce it well; then there are those that can speak only Spanish, but do so as the first generation and are, therefore, still brought down by their family-environment, which includes an indigenous language; then there are those who have achieved an academic title as a result of their second-generation Spanish skills; after them are those who can write and speak with greater skill in Spanish; then come those that can also speak and write some other foreign language, better still if it is English, and so on.

In the same way, in terms of cultural practices, it is clear that those like the urban *mestizos* – who have defined their particular knowledge and skills as socially valorised, legitimate cultural practices on the basis of their privileged relationship with the state – have greater chances for accumulating other types of cultural capital. The indigenous, on the other hand, with other practices and customs, have fewer opportunities for social mobility and cultural accumulation, because they have not gained access to the production of these skills within their immediate environments, and in order to develop them, they have to exert a greater effort to understand them, assimilate them and use them efficiently.

With respect to organisational systems in politics, it is similarly clear that those with better chances at entering public office and benefiting from such positions will be those groups of people well-suited to the exercise of liberal rights, who have been educated by those rights and for those rights: once again, educated *mestizos* in liberal professions. Meanwhile, those educated in the logic of corporatist, communalist and traditional behaviours, like the Indians, are more likely to enter subaltern positions. As a result, in the development of the legal political field, the acquisition of political capital is principally concentrated among those people who, being educated in liberal principles and practices, are well-prepared to carry themselves efficiently in accordance with such liberal dictates and in their service. Meanwhile, in order for those with a different political culture to have any opportunities in the structure of the field of political competences, they must necessarily acquire skills alien to them, usually both belatedly and

ambiguously, such that their efforts can only 'spontaneously' materialise in subordinated and marginal positions of scant legitimate political capital.

This hierarchical construction of languages in the linguistic field, and of politico-organisational cultures in the political field, creates a new social apparatus for the exclusion of indigenous people. It is no longer implemented by the force of law or of arms, but rather 'softly', by means of the procedures and components that, operating in an apparently 'natural' way, result in the higher-ranking posts in the state-apparatus, in the administration of culture and in the economy being occupied by groups that have been Spanish-speaking for a long time, by the heirs of the old colonial networks of power, marked by processes of individuation. Meanwhile, the indigenous, with their communitarian practices, always hold positions of less privilege and power, seemingly as a result of a 'natural selection of aptitudes'. It is a modernised re-ethnicisation of the social division of labour, of occupations, of powers and of political hierarchies. The 'modernist' aspect, here, lies in the use of the façade of equality to reproduce inequalities. There is talk of the equality of the individual vote, but only in order to mask an unequal acknowledgement of politico-organisational cultures and practices, as the representative liberal ones are seen as the only legitimate ones, in opposition to indigenous political practices and systems, which are marked by the importance of the community. There is talk of equality in education, but only in order to conceal an inequality in the recognition of the languages that are publicly valid for social mobility. If we also consider that there is a high probability of associating different social groups in their linguistic, cultural and organisational abilities with specific physical features, then it is not rare to find a racialisation of these abilities. As a result, an ethnic field is once again established, in which a desirable good – legitimate ethnicity based on social and physical whiteness – emerges as the structuring axis of concentrations, positions and competences that confer recognition, grandeur and social standing.

All this is what the Indianism emerging in the 1970s denounced as a 'second-class citizenship'.¹⁰ First-class citizenship is for people that bear the symbolic badges of social whiteness (surname, social networks, personal demeanour), which position them as suitable for taking on government-positions, institutional or business-leadership and social recognition. Second-class citizenship is for those who, as a result of their rural origins, their language or their skin-colour, are 'discouraged' such that they occupy subaltern positions, roles of obedience and restricted opportunities for social mobility.

10. Hurtado 1985.

a) *Ethnicity as capital*

In very general terms, an ethnicity is a community that constructs a set of shared cultural attributes, as well as a belief in a history rooted in a shared ancestry, in addition to a collective unconscious.¹¹ These cultural attributes can be of a subjective nature, such as affective, emotive and symbolic criteria concerning collective affinities; or they can be objective, like language, religion, territory and social organisation. However, the importance of all these attributes lies in the *composition implied within them*; that is, in the form of articulating and understanding them.

There are ethnicities for which the criteria of differentiation are of a racial and biological nature (in Guyana, between Africans and Indians); linguistic and religious (Tamils and Sinhalese people in Sri Lanka); or exclusively based on language (Walloons and Flemish people in Belgium). In any case, what matters in this repertoire of ethnicity¹² is that it manages to form a collective memory going back to an ancestral line, allowing the group to imagine a unique trajectory that differentiates it from others; it allows for an appreciation of the language as a living archive of a worldview shared by the bearers of this communication-code; it creates frameworks for performing the existence of the group that make its public life visible; and it supports a reclamation of the territories considered 'ancestral', where the group's symbolic and identity-based points of reference are presumably anchored.

The evolution of ethnicities may take several trajectories. They can produce nations with a state, like the English; they can form a part of a multinational state that recognises nationalities as components of a confederation (the former Yugoslavia); they can exist as minorities or majorities without an institutional presence in the colonial states; or they can carry on amid a disavowal of their existence, like the Kurds in Turkey.

Ethnicities can follow several paths of development. There are identities produced by the state, and, in fact, there is no modern state that has not invented an ethnic identity, in one way or another.¹³ In other cases, they might date far back in time, be the product of a recent ethnogenesis, or be the product of colonial politics.¹⁴

In this last case, we can agree with Oommen that ethnicities are processes by which certain communities are defined as foreign in their own territories and are stripped of control over the political and economic life in this same territory;¹⁵

11. Hechter 1978.

12. Balibar and Wallerstein 1991.

13. Ibid.

14. Stavenhagen 1996; Clavero 1994.

15. Oommen 1997.

hence colonial rule and the republic can be understood as uninterrupted processes of ethnicising indigenous peoples.

The ethnicisation of the indigenous, by dissociating the cultural community from its territorial sovereignty, creates the structural basis for the processes of exclusion, discrimination and social exploitation that characterise régimes of occupation. In this sense, ethnic labels can also be understood as cultural and political artefacts of the complex systems of social class-structuring¹⁶ that, by means of the symbolic power of specific class-fractions, allows class-differences to be naturalised, in some cases, and in others, enshrines cultural differences as patterns of fundamental social differentiation.¹⁷ In this latter case, the discourse of ethnicity takes the form of political discourse, in which objective class-differences are reduced to cultural differences in an attempt to group together – based on an objective class-position (for example, a certain dominated fraction of intellectuals, or segments of urban merchants), as well as around specific projects – those social sectors with different class-conditions that share, to a greater or lesser extent, the same cultural and symbolic matrix. It is an authentic *euphemisation* of the class-condition. It is dangerous, in that, by cloaking the class-condition, it only serves to strengthen, in the market of cultural goods, the cultural value of certain practices that grant greater negotiating power to that fraction (which bases its advancement on the possession of a certain type of cultural capital) in defining legitimate cultural and political capital. Meanwhile, it leaves intact the distribution of other objective class-conditions, which, once again, confine the subaltern classes to their traditional class-subalternity.

Still, we must investigate the conditions that allow physical indicators, like skin-colour, hair-colour, and surname, to take on such great importance when it comes to classifying and naturalising the differences between social classes. It is not enough to claim that it is merely a matter of cultural constructions through which class-differences are seen as natural differences. The fact that physical classifications play a role as noticeable, desirable or negative assets suggests that they are not just an ‘expression’, a reflection, or the effects of mere discursive ‘deception’. Under certain circumstances, such as Bolivia’s colonial and post-colonial periods, ethnic differentiations in general, and racial classifications in particular, can be seen as a type of specific capital,¹⁸ a specific social good: ethnic capital, which, along with other economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals, helps to shape the values of class-differentiation.

16. Balibar 1991a. For a discussion between ‘primordialists’ and ‘instrumentalists’ about the bases of ethnicity, see Geertz 1993; Cohen 1974; Barth (ed.) 1969.

17. A similar way of understanding the development of social classes in an Andean region can be found in Gose 1994.

18. Bourdieu 1984.

Ethnic capital thus refers to two complementary dimensions: on one hand, to distinctive cultural practices with universal scope, which euphemise and erase the imprints of the objective conditions of their production and control (legitimate language, legitimate tastes and academic knowledge, and so on); and, on the other hand, to objective social differences that have reached the rank of physicalised differences, and which have then erased the history of the objective struggles to impose these differences. Skin-colour and the distinguished surnames with which the colonisers initially made symbolically explicit their objective position as victorious conquerors with rights to riches, land and Indians convert this physicalised symbolic difference into bodily wealth, the display of which symbolically secures their objective position of strength and control. It is a cultural product that confers value to racial features and ancestry, but whose virtue lies in converting the differences actually conquered in the political, military, organisational and technical victory over the colonised into differences of blood that naturalise the objective balance of forces. In broader terms, this form of constructing ethnic assets, but without the consequences of domination, can also be the symbolic structure through which the solid and somewhat closed family- and community-ties (which organise the circulation of the workforce and land-ownership) express their social value, their privileged place in the world, to other nearby communal groups.

This kind of ethnic capital, which today is more valuable than the differences that stem from the distribution of legitimate academic assets, is a type of symbolic capital that affects the effectiveness of all other types of capital (economic, social, political, linguistic, and so on), and that has also created its own field of distribution, competition and positioning to control it. The competition for 'whiteness'¹⁹ in Bolivian society has thus been a form of making either real or fictitious class-structuring physical, but with all the force of symbolic power to produce practical classing or declassing effects in the ordering of the realm of objective class-conditions. This becomes clear when, for example, people from a lower social class want or think they can have an intimate relationship with a partner from a distant social class, because they have the ethnic capital (physical features, surname) of a social class located further up on the social ladder; or the silent pursuit by any family of any social class to find a mate that could culturally or physically 'whiten' their descendants.

The objective importance of processes of social class-structuring and their possibilities of being converted into other capital (such as economic capital) can be seen in the very structure of economic opportunities in the Bolivian labour-market. According to a survey conducted by Jiménez Zamora, indigenous

19. Frankenberg 1989.

people hold 67 percent of the most vulnerable and precarious jobs, 28 percent of semi-skilled jobs, and just 4 percent of skilled jobs.²⁰ These data can be taken as evidence that there is open discrimination against indigenous skilled and semi-skilled workers; or they can be understood as indicating that there are fewer indigenous people that can offer skilled labour than there are Spanish-speaking *mestizos* who can do so; or they can be interpreted to mean that skilled and semi-skilled indigenous workers no longer identify with an indigenous identity; or, lastly, they can suggest that a combination of two or three of these options produces this kind of ethnic segmentation in the labour-market. In any of these cases, whether openly or not, indigenous ethnicity emerges as an object of systematic exclusion and social devaluation.

We can arrive at the same conclusion based on a review of the structure of labour-income. Non-indigenous emigrants earn three times more than indigenous emigrants, while the indigenous, in general, earn only thirty percent of the wage of non-indigenous workers performing the same jobs, and non-indigenous women earn just sixty percent of men's wages.²¹ To put it bluntly, an Indian is 'worth' one-third of a Spanish-speaking *mestizo* man and half of a Spanish-speaking *mestizo* woman.

So, the republic and the acquisition of individual political rights, from 1952 to the present, have, at least formally, dissolved the colonial system of the division of labour, both economic and political. But what has not disappeared – since, more than an administrative measure, it is a cognitive structure of embodied reality – is the racialised or ethnicised representation of the world, the naturalisation of social differences and aptitudes according to specific cultural, historical, geographic and physical properties. Racially expressed discrimination, at least in Bolivia, is no longer just an invention of the state or taxation; it is, above all, common sense. And, to the extent that it is an imagined structuring of the world, with which both the dominant and the dominated see themselves and others in the world, it plays an effective role in the practical structuring of that world.

With the erasure of the memory of the social deed that produced this ethnicisation of social differences and class-structuring, the racial or ethnic ranking of the world takes on a structuring force, since it helps to symbolically delimit social differences, increasing the strength of social differentiation. Hence the presence of ethnic capital – that is, of a régime of competences revolving around ethnic assets (contingently attributed to mother-tongue, place of origin, skin-colour, surname) – which strengthens or devalues each person according to his or her proximity to legitimate or stigmatised ethnicity, in their attempts to obtain other

20. Jiménez Zamora 2000.

21. Ibid.

social goods of an economic, relational or educational nature. Thus today, as is clear from the different paths pursued by subjects in their matrimonial strategies, cultural acquisitions, and wage-hierarchies, the proportional distribution of prestige conferred by cultural background and the treatment of the body itself, 'cultural whiteness' and Indianness are not just stigmatising expressions, but opposite poles that structure the field of legitimate symbolic assets that contribute to the structuring of the social classes.

b) *Monocultural state, multinational society*

It has been said that a nation is a unit of language, culture, territory and economy. This is partly true, but as a result of the consolidation of the nation, and not as its point of origin or its defining substance.

There are nations that have more than one official language, such as Belgium and Paraguay, while in other cases, the fledgling nation initially included numerous regional and local languages, without this impeding the development of a national spirit for the fight for independence, as in the United States and Germany. There are currently more than four hundred languages in the world, but the number of nations does not exceed a hundred and ninety, reinforcing the notion that not all languages result in a nation, nor does every nation need just one language in order to develop.

Similarly, cultural unity, which can be the outcome of long centuries of social cohesion, is not a prerequisite for the formation of a nation. Indeed, all modern nations initially were, and continue to be, groupings of diverse cultural practices, but with the articulatory capacity of a national identity enabling them to compete in the global context. France, for example, was a cultural and linguistic mosaic in the eighteenth century, where entire regions shared more cultural affinities with parts of southern Germany or northern Italy, but this was not an obstacle to the construction of the French nationality as a republican entity possessing state-sovereignty.

Likewise, economic unity is not a prerequisite for the formation of a nation. Israel, long before it had relatively unified economic institutions, already existed as a national desire among all those that considered themselves fellow nationals scattered throughout different regions of the world. In this case, the cohesive economy and even the territory were the result, not the precondition, of the strength of national identification. At heart, territory, culture and language are a product of the history of the nation, their historical substantiation and material corroboration, not the beginning of their formation. In fact, there are many peoples who possess territory and cultural, linguistic and economic unity, yet remain mere ethnic fragments, or, in other cases, prefer to dissolve into larger

national entities, in which they believe they will find more satisfactory public rights than those they could obtain autonomously. The history of some European, African and Latin-American peoples has been precisely this path, while that of others has been one of violent extinction.

What matters about territory, language, culture, and even the economy, is not their sum-total, because not even with all these four components are nations thus created. What matters is how these elements are used with respect to the future; that is, their historical connotation or extent of qualification, which can be used by the social conglomerate that identifies in advance with a shared destiny, with a community of belonging and transcendence.

Language or territory can be understood as specific (folkloric) components of a greater social structure, as devalued belongings from which it is best to dissociate oneself, or as expressions of an uncompromisingly separate and differentiated identity from those that surround and dominate it. Only in this case do language, territory or culture become components of a national identity; therefore, what matters is that they are read, interpreted, signified, desired, or, in other words, their form of politicisation.

Nations are, then, political artefacts, political constructions that create a sense of belonging to a type of historical entity that can confer a sense of transcendent collectivity, a sense of historical certainty in the face of the vicissitudes of the future, a sense of a basic familiar bond between people who will surely never see each other, but who supposedly share a form of intimacy, of historical proximity, of possibilities of cohabitation that other people who constitute 'otherness', alterity, do not possess. Herein lie the importance and the prominent role that discursive constructions and leaderships play in the development of national identities, due to their capacity to articulate demands, predispositions, expectations and solidarities in symbolic frameworks of aggregation and autonomous political action in the field of the dominant cultural, territorial and political competences.²² Nations are social, territorial and cultural frontiers that exist first in the heads of fellow nationals, and which have the strength to become objectified in material and institutional structures. In this sense, nations are political communities whose members, those that see themselves as part of the nation, identify in advance with an institutionality that they recognise as their own and within which they constitute their social struggles, their abilities and mentalities.²³ Precisely the formulation of these symbolic frontiers in the collective imaginary, based on the visualisation and politicisation of the actual frontiers

22. Miller 1995; Eagleton 1999.

23. Balibar 1991b.

of the existing colonial segregation, would seem to be one of the rising claims asserted by the Aymara indigenous social movement of recent years.²⁴

National formations are, initially, performative discourses²⁵ with the strength to generate the processes that construct communities of political consent with which people define an 'us' distinct from 'others'. They do so by means of the reinterpretation, enunciation or invention of one or more social components (for example, language, religion, ethnicity, and a history of domination), which, from that moment on, become the components of differentiation and community-belonging that guarantee their members a collective security in their shared future. It is a type of communicative interaction that produces, or unearths, or invents, an expanded fraternity, a broadened kinship able to create, first, a gravitational attraction toward certain demographic sectors that will feel drawn in, and second, a complementary effect of repulsion toward those who then feel excluded. Because of all this, it is said that nations are 'imagined communities'.²⁶ In this sense, nations do not need a pre-existing ethnic community to become consolidated, although this may favour it, producing a monoethnic nation.

In general, nations are the outcome of a political aggregation of many ethnicities, and the nation is precisely the production of a new (real or fictitious) ethnicity that allows the relevance and the necessity of the current existence of the nation to be projected into the past. But, at the same time, as processes of remaking the collective subjectivity that creates a sense of 'us', nations are also a form of producing the 'common', the common good that unites the group and differentiates it from 'other' groups, and, in this sense, they are political communities, as their articulatory strength is precisely the management, distribution and conservation of this common good.

24. 'Struggles over ethnic or regional identity – in other words, over the properties (stigmata or emblems) linked with the *origin* through the *place* of origin and its associated durable marks, such as accent – are a particular case of the different struggles over classifications, struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to *make and unmake groups*. What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of division which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group' (Bourdieu 1991, p. 221).

25. Ethnic or regionalist discourse 'is a *performative discourse* which aims to impose as legitimate a new definition of the frontiers and to get people to know and recognize the *region* that is thus delimited in opposition to the dominant definition, which is mis-recognized as such... The act of categorization, when it manages to achieve recognition or when it is exercised by a recognized authority, exercises by itself a certain power: "ethnic" or "regional" categories, like categories of kinship, institute a reality by using the power of *revelation* and *construction* exercised by *objectification in discourse*' (Bourdieu 1991, p. 223).

26. Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983; Guibernau 1996.

Hence, it is no strange thing that the state is sometimes confused with the nation, as both deal with the management of the common good. The former, however, is institutionalised from above, and works to produce the illusion of a political community from the top down (according to Marx), while the nation, in contrast, exists from the moment in which a political community is imagined from below and works from the bottom up to create an institutionality that embodies this political desire. In modern societies, when only the 'illusory community' (the state) works, we encounter forms of authoritarianism and nationalisation-processes being curtailed, such as those in Bolivia. When the 'illusory community' results from the institutionalised specification of the 'imagined community' (the nation), we find the formation of political legitimacy and successful nationalisation.

This identification between nation and the institutional concretisation of the political community in the form of the state has led to the affirmation that we can only speak of nations, in the strict sense, when the political intersubjectification of fellow nationals achieves governmental autonomy through the state, and that until this happens we must speak of nationalities. The virtue of this assertion lies in that it does not assume an essentialist or static vision of national construction; it sees it as a field of forces, as a process, as a political course that reaches maturity when it is institutionalised as a state.

In Bolivia, it is very much evident that, despite the profound processes of cultural *mestizaje* (*mestizo*-isation), a national community has not yet been realised. There are at least thirty regional languages and/or dialects;²⁷ there are two languages that are the mother-tongue of 37 percent of the population (Aymara and Quechua), and close to 62 percent identify themselves as belonging to an indigenous people.²⁸ And, to the extent that every language is a whole understanding of the world, this linguistic diversity is also cultural and symbolic diversity. If we add to this that there are cultural and national identities older than the republic, and that, even today, they demand political sovereignty over seized territories (as in the case of the Aymaras), it is very clear that Bolivia is, at heart, a coexistence of various overlapping or somewhat combined regional nationalities and cultures.²⁹ However, despite this, the state is monolingual and monocultural in

27. Albó 1999a.

28. INE 2002.

29. All identities are always the fruit of deliberate work in the discursive, symbolic and organisational field, which produces a state of self-reflexivity in subjects in order to demarcate imagined borders (real or believed) that differentiate them from other subjects. This distinctive will is always the fruit of an activity specifically intended to achieve an objective, and, therefore, it is always fabricated, produced. In this sense, all identities are cultural inventions that, either externally to the group (as with the colonialists' 'Indians', for example), or as a result of the presence of internal political élites (the contemporary Aymara identity), make visible and resignify some shared element (language,

terms of the Spanish-speaking Bolivian cultural identity. This implies that only with the Spanish language can people obtain rights and possibilities of social mobility within the country's various power-structures – economic, political, judicial and military as well as cultural ones. Despite the fact that most people

history, ancestors, culture, religion, and so on), with which boundaries are set down to distinguish them from other people, and substantive loyalties (a kind of extended kinship) are instilled amongst the 'identified'.

Of course, this production of identities cannot be made out of nothing; there are greater chances of success when there are similar conditions of objective existence among people, but it is also possible that, even when these similar objective conditions do exist, a cultural identity or differentiated politics will never be produced. All identities are historically contingent and relational; thus any speculation about 'originary' and 'fabricated' identities is reprehensible. The only rigorous approach, in any case, is to inquire into the conditions of production of this or that identity and its capacity for mobilisation, and not about its artificiality, as all identities are, ultimately, social inventions.

A common error concerning the concept of identity, that of Jorge Lazarte, for example, is to confound ethnic identity, based on cultural practices, with a socio-economic régime or technical acquisition, as it regards identifying oneself as Aymara or indigenous as antagonistic to demanding the Internet or tractors. While the former has to do with the cultural system of signification with which subjects know and act in the world, the latter refers to the economic organisation and access to resources upon which this signification of the world acts. A German person and an English person can have a car, a mobile phone and an industry in common, but that does not make them participants in the same cultural identity, nor is their attachment to the language or the cultural tradition of their respective cultural communities a return to the technology of the Middle-Ages. Similarly, that the Aymara people demand modern roads, telephone-systems and technology does not mean that they have renounced their language, their tradition, or that they joyfully demand their rapid conversion to the Spanish language and their immediate cultural mixing.

Unlike what Lazarte believes, indigenous cultural identity is not associated with a return to the *takit'aclla* plough, as if identity were associated with a specific technological level of society and a single activity (agricultural work). The Aymaras, for example, have shown that it is possible to be culturally Aymara not only when cultivating in the time of the precolonial *suka kollos*, but also in the times of the colonial *mita*, the republican *hacienda* and the modern factory. The confusion between ethnic identity and a socio-economic régime leads to an interpretation set in stone, and, therefore, useless in accounting for the complicated processes of the modern construction of ethnic identities. Like in other parts of the world, indigenous identity-claims are not incompatible with, for example, industrial or technical modernity. Indeed, this is when the very vitality and regenerative capacity of cultural identities are put to the test. That the Aymaras demand tractors, but with discourses in their own language and as part of an indigenous project of political autonomy, far from debilitating the process of identity-construction, inserts it into modernity itself, or, in other words, fights for a modernity combined with tradition and based on the repertoires of indigenous cultural signification. Is it not at all possible to be culturally or nationally Aymara and, at the same time, be an engineer, a worker, a manufacturer or a farmer?

The peasant-centric and archaic reductionism with which some conservative ideologies attempt to interpret indigenous cultural identity-formation not only suffers from a lack of knowledge about history and social theory, but it is also strongly marked by an ethnocentric mental framework, which tends to associate the indigenous with the backward, the rural and the opposite of the 'development' and 'modernity' implicitly naturally part of the *mestizo* and Spanish-speaking world.

hold rural-urban indigenous cultural origins, physical and cultural 'whiteness' is an asset pursued by every social stratum, as it symbolises social mobility and becomes a symbolic advantage contributing to the ability to better position oneself in the processes of social class-structuring and destructuring.

What is paradoxical about all this is that this compulsive construction of ethnic identities delegated or attributed ('the indigenous') by the state itself, which enables the constitution of whiteness as capital to be accrued and Indianness as devalued stigma, is accompanied by a repudiation of ethnicity as the subject of political rights, in a repeat of the classic schizophrenic attitude of the state that institutionally promotes the inexistence of the majority ethnic identities, while, at the same time, it regulates ethnic exclusion as a means of the racialised monopolisation of social powers.

In Bolivia, there are almost fifty historico-cultural communities with different characteristics and hierarchical positions. The majority of these cultural communities are located in the eastern region of the country, and demographically they range from a few dozen families to almost a hundred thousand people. The two largest indigenous historico-cultural communities are located in the western part of the country, namely the Quechua and Aymara speakers.

The former, resulting from indigenous migrations and the policies of Spanish colonisation, which imposed the Quechua language in the old Aymara *ayllus*, only constitute, in a strict sense, a linguistic community, and not so much an ethnic identity with a cohesive degree of politicisation. In general, this linguistic community, despite including almost three and a half million people, features a high degree of permeability that brings its members, in some cases, to quickly merge with other cultural structures, especially urban-*mestizo* ones, to group together around peasant- or trade-union class-identities, and, in other cases, to become concentrated in ethnic micro-identities around *ayllus* or federations of *ayllus* (the *ayllus* located in Potosí and in Sucre).

In contrast, the other large linguistic community, the Aymaras, who number a little more than two and a half million people, feature all the elements of a highly cohesive and politicised ethnic identity. Unlike the other indigenous identities, the Aymara identity has for decades produced cultural élites able to create discursive structures strong enough to reinvent an autonomous history that anchors the pursuit of an autonomous future in the past, a system of mass union-mobilisation around these political beliefs, and, recently, a leadership able to confer a visible body-politic to ethnicity. In historical terms, the Aymara identity is not only the oldest in the Bolivian territory, but, above all, the one that has most systematically created an architecture of beliefs, of political discourses based on self-government, of projects of its own, and of a mobilising force with

respect to these demands.³⁰ Unlike the rest of the indigenous cultural identities, it is the one with an extensive intellectual élite, which has constructed an ethnic discourse that, through the union-network, has been appropriated by broad sectors of the population, constituting itself as the only current indigenous nationality-like identity.

Lastly, there is the dominant Bolivian cultural identity, resulting from 179 years of republican life and which, though it initially arose as a state-created political artifice, now has a set of historico-cultural and popular milestones that make it consistently and predominantly urban.

All this should not make us forget that, like any ethnic identity, in Bolivia these are flexible identities, and, in extreme cases, they are contingent upon the attributes of the context, which advance or draw back their borders according to the historical cycles of economic expansion and the openness of the spaces of governmental power.

These diverse linguistic communities and ethnic identities have different symbolic configurations, worldviews, organisational forms, cultural knowledge and practices and territorial attachments. Nonetheless, the majority of these cognitive and practical references have never been integrated into the establishment of the legitimate state's symbolic and organisational world, because the structures of social power are under the monopoly-rule of the Bolivian ethnic identity. This is why we can say that the republican state is a monoethnic or monocultural state, and, in this sense, an exclusive and racist one.

This state-monoculturalism is visible daily, when, for example, students with Aymara or Quechua as their home- or childhood-language have to incorporate, among the structural conditions for academic success, in addition to the availability of time and cultural resources that flow from their socio-economic condition, the mastery of new linguistic skills monopolised by Spanish-speaking students, since Spanish is the legitimate language for acquiring educational goods. In this case, the home-language is the point of departure for a visible Indianness, and, therefore, for a stigma that undervalues the body of available skills for different social competences. Something similar occurs in many public domains (military service, administrative positions, the judiciary, banking access, and so on), and not for a minority, but rather for more than half the population. In certain contexts, surname, dress and skin-colour can fulfil this same devaluing role in one's social trajectory.

It is well known that the state needs to create collective adherences and systems of common objectives and values that allow it to create an imaginary uniting

30. Hurtado 1985; García Linera 2003.

the different social groups present within the territory it influences. The school, the system of birth-records, of supplying identity-cards, of voting, the public rituals, the array of civic symbols, and so on, create this base of cultural affiliation that, over the long term, produces a state-invented ethnicity. The problem with this begins when this state-monoethnisation is made by arbitrarily selecting a set of skills, competences and values monopolised by specific groups, to the detriment of others. This problem becomes complex when these identity-based components are predominantly controlled by limited or minoritarian sectors of the population, and, even worse, when the acquisition of these components of ethnic legitimisation is an unsuccessful or mutilated enterprise, as a result of the state-endorsed symbolic devaluation to which the people who enter into these processes of de-ethnisation and re-ethnisation are subject; and this is precisely what happens in Bolivia.

In linguistic terms, in a country of approximately eight million inhabitants, a little more than four million speak Aymara or Quechua as their mother-tongue, or are bilingual with Spanish. However, no government-office, no institute of higher education, nor any high-ranking economic, political or cultural posts have the Aymara or Quechua languages as an official means of communication. State-monolingualism, while it arbitrarily establishes a single language as the language of the state, in practice devalues the other languages as means with which to access public office or as a mechanism of urban social mobility. It also, surreptitiously, coerces the bilingual and monolingual Aymara-Quechua speakers to abandon their languages, as they are not considered legitimate cultural goods.

The fact that there are increasingly more people that speak Spanish or combine Spanish with another native language is not a 'choice' based on the recognition of the virtues of the state's monoethnic *mestizo* condition; it is a consequence of the relations of ethnic domination that, with the strength of state-power, have prioritised specific cultural goods to the detriment of others. In light of this, the opposition of several indigenous peasant-communities to bilingual primary-school education (Spanish with Aymara, for example) is easy to understand; it is a rational act based on calculated expectations. What good would it be to learn to read and write in Aymara, if it is not going to be of any use for obtaining urban employment, nor for interacting with government-agencies or entering into a recognised profession? Thus, nobody should be surprised by the decrease in the number of people that speak only a native language, along with the growth of bilingualism or of the group of people that only speak Spanish, as this is the direct outcome of the state's cultural and symbolic coercion. It is easy to envision that the rates of bilingualism, and even of native monolingualism, would grow markedly if the structures of state-power were officially and

extensively bilingual or trilingual, as is the case in other modern multicultural and multinational states.

c) *Multicivilisational society and the schizophrenic state*

State-monoethnicity or mononationality in a multiethnic or multinational state is, therefore, the first barrier to an efficient and democratic relationship between society and the state. Nonetheless, this is not the only problem with structural complexity in what we call Bolivia. The other axis of substantial social fragmentation is what René Zavaleta called 'the motley', a concept that can be summed up as the overlapping coexistence of several modes of production, of several historical periods and political systems.³¹ In more tangible terms, we could say that Bolivia is a country in which several civilisations coexist in a fragmented fashion, but where the state-structure claims the organisational logic of only one of them – the logic of modern market-capitalism.

Following Elias,³² on a general level, the civilisational system can be understood as the social web and behavioural patterns with which people are used to living. This involves the forms of differentiating social roles, the forms of constituting the institutions that monopolise physical and intimidatory violence, the ways of symbolising the long-term forecast of sequences in the relationships between people (technology), and the dictates and prohibitions that shape the bond between people.³³ There is, then, a coherent set of structures that generate the material, political and symbolic order that differentiates productive functions, technical processes, systems of authority, political organisation, and symbolic frameworks with which large communities give coherence to the world. A civilisational system is much more than a mode of production, as it forms the cognitive matrix and the processes of authority that regulate collective life. Similarly, a civilisation can go through several modes of production, such as the archaic community and the rural community, which, as two different modes of production, shared similar life-organising matrices. Likewise, a civilisation can include several discontinuous territories and several peoples or nations, like the global capitalist civilisation, which includes more than a hundred nation-states,

31. Zavaleta 1986a; Tapia 2002a.

32. Elias 1978; see also Braudel 1979.

33. Guillermo Bonfil employed a pioneering use of the concept of civilisation to study indigenous peoples, although in a form directly associated with the social characteristics of the peasant (centred around self-sufficient production, family-solidarity, reciprocity, communal-land ownership, nature as a living, interacting being, and so on). See Bonfil 1987.

or communal civilisation, which includes both Aymara and Quechua speakers living in agricultural communities.

In Bolivia, there are four large civilisational systems.³⁴ These four civilisations are:

34. In a recent text (Archondo 2004), Rafael Archondo tries to make a number of observations about our proposal regarding the multinationalisation of the state. Unfortunately, his attention to the aesthetics of irony has been to the detriment of argumentative reason and knowledge. He indicates that the state cannot be the (implied) 'synthesis' of society, but only 'of the political', as if the authority that guarantees the citizenship-rights of the members of a territory, the taxes that sustain the bureaucratic administration or the property-system that prioritises access to collectively generated assets only affected the small élites 'thirsty for power', while the rest, the majority, lived in the type of non-state so coveted by primitive anarchism.

The naivety of the concept of a society outside the state would be no more than innocent speculation if it were not for the fact that it 'forgets' or hides the reality that the state 'lives' off of the resources of all of society, hierarchically allocates these assets according to the strength of all fractions of society, and it establishes access to these powers by means of coercion and the legitimacy it obtains from all of society's members. The state is, therefore, a total social relation, not just the aspiration of the 'capable' or of those 'thirsty' for power; the state runs through all of us in some way, hence its public nature. If the state only affected 'ideologically active élites', then Archondo should wonder about the reason for the phantasmal income-tax he pays every month, about the unreality of property-deeds and about the fiction of the vote.

In part, this whole illusion is related to the dream of state-bureaucrats, who think that they owe nothing to society and that public affairs exist solely for the virtuous. Archondo confuses the administration of the state with the state itself. The former is, indeed, a thing of élites, who administer state-power, while the latter is a relational and mechanical thing that, in one way or another, runs through all of society. The solidity of a modern state lies in its ability to produce a political relationship with all of society by means of an active legitimacy, such that the interests of different politically active social blocs are hierarchically organised in state-functions, and the élites of these blocs can compete to gain access to the different mechanisms of power. This is precisely what does not happen in this country. Here, not even the state is a social, relational thing (evidenced by the percentage of people that do not pay taxes or have access to political or social citizenship), nor are the collective rights of a demographic majority (the indigenous as a historico-political identity) included in full citizenship-rights. Archondo's proto-reflexive simplicity becomes clear political militancy as soon as he criticises the proposal of a multiculturalisation or multinationalisation of the state's decision-making structures. It is understandable that he may not be familiar with the institutional adaptations that other multicultural democratic states have implemented (Belgium, Switzerland, India, Canada, and so on). In this case, we can simply recommend that he review the relevant literature before venturing to weigh in on things that he does not understand. But what does merit comment is the principle that a proportional presence of cultural identities in the state would be a form of '*apartheid*'. If Archondo had had the grace to review the meaning of the words he uses with such notable levity, he would have discovered that *apartheid* means exclusion from power-structures based precisely upon people's belonging to a cultural community, and that this is legally regulated. This is what happens in Bolivia, not by legislative means, but rather in practice, just as we are demonstrating here, and it does so with the practical consequences of segregated access to public resources and social mobility.

This hypocritical *apartheid*, to which Archondo is attached, is exactly what should be dismantled, rather than being legitimised with little phrases about a de-ethnicised 'democracy' that enshrine the monoethnicity of the state-structure. In multicultural societies,

- Modern, market-industrial civilisation, which includes people who, possessing an eminently market-focused and accumulative rationality, have gone through processes of individuation and uprooting from traditional

the *demos* of democracy must be culturally plural, because otherwise, it leaves the mechanisms of political exclusion intact, with the imposition of a single parameter of *demos* that will never be either impartial or universal. In this respect, Archondo's attachment to the illusion that identity is a matter of individual choice is symptomatic, as are liberalism's claims regarding culturally homogenous societies. What we should not lose sight of is that identity is a product of collective struggles around access to resources based on the politicisation of certain factors (language, religion, history, tradition, and so on), and that the state also produces identities, both dominant and dominated. It is a context of powers from which individuals cannot remove themselves in order to choose freely, and, even less so, when these powers regulate access to a society's economic and political goods, as in Bolivia.

The immaculate individuality to which Archondo is attached is a fiction that legitimates, with universalist clothing, the dominant state-identity (as the state monopolises legitimate education, legitimate language, legitimate culture, legitimate history) and *de facto* reproduces the dominated identities. Ultimately, the dismantling of this actually existing domination is the uncrossable boundary of all this pseudoliberalism, which verges on frivolity. Archondo should ask himself about what 'freedom' the Indians have to successfully 'whiten themselves' or 'gringify themselves' when seeking matrimonial exchanges, employment or public recognition.

With respect to our critic's anxiety about how to identify cultural communities, this is a political act of self-identification whose jurisdiction is the territoriality of the state. In multicultural democracies, all citizens can exercise their citizenship-rights based on their cultural belonging, wherever they might be located, or choose representatives of their cultural community from any place, as the state is multicultural in its central structure. With the difference that, in places where a cultural identity is territorially the majority, the decision-making structures of sub-national (regional) power are culturally predominant, but recognise the rights of other cultural minorities within them.

With respect to considering identities and different civilisations as watertight spaces, as Archondo suggests, we can revisit our responses in this text to more solid and coherent critical arguments. In any case, the fact that Bush uses the words 'democracy' and 'freedom' to legitimise his wars does not make democracy and freedom warlike concepts. The same thing happens with the concept of 'civilisation' employed by Samuel Huntington. If Archondo had read the author before using him for his purposes of comparison and disparagement, he would have realised that for Huntington, civilisation is synonymous with culture, and that culture is reduced to language and, in some cases, to religion. And it is with this concept that he puts together his conservative interpretation of the 'clash of civilisations'.

In our case, and revisiting the sociological use by Norbert Elias and other Latin-American researchers that Archondo would do well to review, with the concept of civilisation, we seek to articulate the concept of mode of production, in its hard technical and organisational core, and the system of political authority and the form of structurally signifying the world. Like any concept, it is not reality, but rather a way of mentally ordering information about reality; thus, it is epistemologically abusive to want to 'map out' and geographically demarcate 'civilisations' with a pencil and ruler. This concept is a category that allows us to understand how come people's behaviours, the logics and organisational practices they use to materially and symbolically produce and reproduce their lives, can be overlapping, or, sometimes, hierarchically fused together. Disqualifying a category as a result of the use given to it by a different author who defines it differently is an ideological juggling act that easily wins applause, but, intellectually speaking, it is a sham.

communities. They experience the separation of the political with respect to the economic, and they create the basis of the conditions of their existence as dominant or subordinate actors in waged labour such as mining and industrial manufacturing, banking, large-scale trade, public services, transportation, and so on, with their respective circuits of accumulation and the direct market-exchange of products, goods and labour. In demographic terms, no more than twenty or thirty percent of the people in the country are directly and technically involved in this social setting.

- The second civilisational régime is that with the economy and culture organised around simple market-activity of a domestic, artisan- or peasant-nature. Those belonging to this régime have an occupational or corporatist rationality and a system of political institutions based on the normalised coalition of small business owners. A good part of the so-called informal sector, which accounts for 68 percent of urban workers, artisans and smallholder-peasants, corresponds to this social segment.
- Third, there is communal civilisation, with its technological procedures based on the strength of the masses, the management of family- and communal land and the fusion between economic and political activity, with its own authorities and political institutions that favour normative action over elective action,³⁵ and in which individuality is a product of the community and its history.
- Lastly, there is the Amazonian civilisation, based on the itinerant nature of its productive activity, on technology based on knowledge and individual hard work, and on the absence of the state.

Altogether, two-thirds of the inhabitants of the country³⁶ find themselves in one of the last three civilisational or societal groups.³⁷ It is clear that this is a conceptual model that does not exclude complex ties, overlaps and hybridisations, produced by colonisation, between these four civilisational blocs, at the same

35. Habermas 1984.

36. Agriculture is comprised of 550,000 domestic units, which include 90 percent of the agrarian population, while in urban labour, 700,000 semi-businesses and family units predominate, accounting for 65 percent of urban employment. In this respect, see Grebe 2002; Arze 1999.

37. Guillermo Bonfil proposed using the category of civilisation to understand the organising structure of indigenous peoples. For him, civilisation was 'a sufficiently high and complex level of cultural development (in the broadest and most inclusive sense of the term "cultural") to act as a common base and essential orientation for the historical projects of all the peoples that share that civilisation.' See Bonfil 1987. A similar concept to the one we use here is that proposed by Luis Tapia with the category 'societal'. See Tapia 2002b.

time that it highlights the differences in the current patterns of social organisation in Bolivian social space.³⁸

Now, in general, the norms, functions, institutions and representations with which state-life has been constituted in Bolivia have considered the universe of representation, general interpretation and synthesis to be only those liberal practices and political dispositions (party-régime, the secret individual ballot, the separation of powers, separation of politics from the economy, and so on) that result from their insertion in modern market-life, with its customs of elective affiliation and of individuals partially uprooted from ties of lineage and traditional relationships with their fellow residents – individuals who are well-suited to forms of partisan aggregation and the formation of public authority through the modern political market.³⁹

In contrast, the majority of the population – immersed in non-industrial economic, cognitive and cultural structures, also including other linguistic and cultural identities – have different political customs and technologies, resulting from their own material and technical life. The prioritisation of collective identity above individuality, of deliberative practices above elective practices, of normative coercion as a mode of rewarding behaviour above free adherence and compliance, of depersonalising power, of its consensual revocability and the rotation of functions, and so on – these are forms of behaviour that tell of political cultures different from liberal and representative partisan ones, deeply rooted in their own objective living conditions, in their own technical systems of social reproduction. Cooperativism, the centrality of consensual assemblies, rotating leaderships and traditional normative customs tell of types of political action, political organisation and political technologies rooted in the very economic and technical structure of non-modern civilisational systems. They are,

38. The proposal to differentiate Bolivia's structural heterogeneity into three or four blocs was developed in Tapia 2002b and García Linera 2002.

Later, Roberto Laserna proposed the 'concept' of 'different economies' to refer to this Bolivian social complexity (Laserna 2004). Leaving aside this sudden change in theoretical approach by one who had, just a few months earlier, enthusiastically evaluated the economy as being immersed in the unstoppable process of globalisation (see Laserna 2002, and my critique of this type of ideological schizophrenia), the only innovation in Laserna's text is the fact that he attributes the failure of the application of liberal reforms to the existence of these 'distinct economies'. If it is all about failures, perhaps it would be more honest to think about the social failure and the ignorance of the free-market ideologues who rushed into applying modernising formulas to a country that they did not know or understand. Nonetheless, unlike the concept of 'different economies' proposed by Laserna, that of the multisocietal or multicivilisational not only incorporates the 'modes of production' or differentiated economies, but it also refers to the existence of multiple systems of authority and multiple symbolic structures for defining the world that coexist in a hierarchical fashion in Bolivia.

39. Bobbio 1987.

therefore, still active as long as these economic, cultural and symbolic systems that organise social life are maintained.

In homogenous and politically nationalised cultural societies, there is an ethico-political principle of criteria of cohesion, which establishes the state as the legitimate substantiation of this historical integration, holding ultimate power over resources and decisions about how to manage these resources. This can occur because the state, despite its hierarchies, presents itself as the imagined synthesis of society, for which ultimate sovereignty is not a matter of dispute, but rather one of deliberate fulfilment.

In complex societies like the Bolivian one, the state is presented as a mono-ethnic and monocivilisational relational and political structure, which, just as it denies or destroys other cultural terms for interpreting and representing territorial resources, its legitimacy is permanently in doubt and under threat by other cultural and ethnic identities and other ways of understanding responsibility for the common good, excluded from governmental administration.

This gives way to the emergence of a strategic uncertainty about the state's legitimacy, occasionally remedied with top-down pacts of mutual tolerance, vulnerable to being broken by any camp, as soon as any group becomes careless or weakened. This has been precisely the situation of the Bolivian state throughout its 179 years of republican life, converting it into not only an 'apparition' of a state,⁴⁰ but also a gelatinous one, under permanent suspicion due to its inability structurally to combine the social forces that coexist in its area of geographic influence.

In the absence of a nationalising principle of belonging or of extended symbolic kinship between people under the state's influence, sovereignty becomes a constant stage for high- and low-intensity wars, in which different subjects – the state through its laws, business-owners with their economic interests, and communities by means of their practices and customs – temporally elucidate kaleidoscopic and fractured forms of territorial sovereignty. The affirmation that, in Bolivia, each region resembles its own small country, merely affirms this situation of state-uncertainty, which impedes any pretence of restoring any commonly accepted territorial government-normativity, respected and endorsed by all members of society. In Bolivia, the state is not a source of hegemony, in the sense that it has not managed to generate long-lasting shared beliefs or behaviours that establish a basic principle of accepted sovereignty. In this absence of any shared illusion of political community, the state and its norms are always seen as a simple instrumental tool, and almost never as an expressive synthesis of society as a whole.

40. Zavaleta 1986a.

This catastrophic discord between these civilisational structures has been a constant in all the political orders of the republic, including the most democratic one, which emerged from the 1952 Revolution. Today, when there are attempts to establish the rule of law, this catastrophic discord manifests itself once again, now with even greater virulence due to the non-state articulation of these other non-liberal political rationalities and institutionality is not a result of the persistence of an authoritarian culture,⁴¹ as if politics depended only on cultural customs that can be corrected with pedagogical actions or political evangelising. It is a structural feature, rooted in the materiality of the disparate or barely combined coexistence of civilisational régimes that have not changed as a result of simple appeals to conscience. Indeed, this belief, which attempts to reduce the only legitimate means of doing politics to liberal-representative and individualised forms, is not only a form of political intolerance, but also of exacerbated authoritarianism with respect to the cultural plurality of ways of doing and understanding politics, including democracy.

Strictly speaking, in order to work successfully, the liberal régime of representative democracy (which the élites desperately pursue) requires a series of indispensable prerequisites or primary conditions of possibility. First, there is what Zavaleta once called the prejudice of equality as a mass phenomenon.⁴² Of course, if it is a matter of the individuals participating in the party-political market being able to exchange political goods untouched by 'extrapolitical' coercion, in order to guarantee free personal eligibility and the principle of equality between every option in the constitution of the 'general will', then it is people with the same legal rights to trade and the same political prerogative with respect to public authority who must confront each other in the market. This is the sustenance of the economic market, and, with greater reason, of the political market. This is, certainly, a legal and political illusion; however, it is a well-founded illusion, to the extent that, in the electoral act, the people 'believe' that they have the same power as everyone else, independently of their economic or cultural position, just as they believe that they have the same rights and options in the market as do their competitors, customers and suppliers. But this then requires:

a) That society has adopted the market-logic in the majority of its productive, consumptive, cultural, intellectual and ethical activities, which occurs by means of the generalisation and technical command of the capitalist production-régime and the extinction of non-capitalist productive structures, such as agro-peasant,

41. Mansilla 1994; Lazarte 2001.

42. Zavaleta 1983.

communal and artisans' structures. This is called real subsumption.⁴³ With regard to the requirements for the proper working of representative democracy, the absence of real subsumption or the existence of non-capitalist productive structures and of non-market exchange-systems is an obstacle for the constitution of equal subjects able to accept the market as the rational underpinning of their social behaviours, including the political.

In the case of Bolivia, it is abundantly clear that we find ourselves under the dominion of capitalist rationality, but that it is not generalised. What is more, close to two-thirds of economic circuits operate with non-industrial parameters. As a result, in terms of mental frameworks, not only is the presence of a sense of social equality scarce with respect to the small size of the fully capitalist economy, but also, there are spaces of fragmented, territorialised equality based on place of residence, kinship, ties to other residents, and so on. One of the structural conditions of representative democracy is, therefore, non-existent in the Bolivian social formation.

b) The other component of the constitution of political equality is the breakdown of the modes of differentiating access to political rights based on culture, ethnicity, religion or gender, preventing sheer numbers from being a form of determining the general will. This means that the constitution of relevant political capital should conform to institutionalised cultural goods issued in a public and undifferentiated fashion, such as with the certification of academic qualifications. Given that colonialisms, among other things, institute inherited ethnicity and culture as hierarchising social goods and as forms of political capital that guarantee or deny political rights, the logic of representative democracy requires political decolonisation and a certain degree of cultural homogenisation. This has been called the nationalisation of society, and it is an essential feature for the development of citizenship and liberal representative competence.

There cannot be liberal representation while colonial régimes exist that impose a minority's culture, ethnicity or religion as passport-stamps for political participation. In the case of Bolivia, this is precisely the reality. Above the *majority*-populations with their culture, linguistic uses and specific ethnicity, there is a *minoritarian* social group, with a language, culture and ethnicity that are different, but are instituted as legitimate and dominant. It thus turns out that the racist and colonial practices of the political élites, supposedly dedicated to processes of political modernisation, are at the same time some of the most important obstacles to their own liberalising political preferences.

Second, for this liberal form of political exchange to work, there must be a minimum of what Max Weber called 'shared goals and values', which can pro-

43. Marx 1976.

mote a shared and relatively coherent sense of the public, validating as accepted norms the competition between political proposals, the rules of election and the political equivalencies of electoral proposals.

The possibility of the political market being taken to be the site of constituting public powers depends upon a body of shared beliefs about the best way to constitute society's intervention in the management of what unites them (the world of social ends), but, in addition, it relies on members of society sharing the certainty that they have, over the long term, something in common: the world of shared values.

It is a spiritual, cultural, but also procedural matter, which can establish a narrative of a social body that is, in turn, a way of creating its cohesion and its desire for permanence. For these structures of perception and social action to exist has, in modern times, required a certain state-induced cultural homogeneity (hence nations are partly state-artifices), but, above all, it has needed the cultural and organisational effects of *real subsumption*, which is no less than the destruction or weakening of other forms of social affiliation – the extinction or subalternation of other networks for the spiritual constitution of the social body, like the family, the town, the agrarian community, and so on.

The persistence of other mechanisms of social identification, of other mechanisms for obtaining local collective values, has the virtue of making the aggregation of political wills in a party impossible, as the party is based on *elective affiliations*, voluntary ones, by individuals untied to other forms of collective belonging. The persistence of traditional structures of producing and thinking, in contrast, generates both forms of *normative affiliation*, in that individuals are the way they are because of the pre-existence of and their membership in the group, as well as forms of local *political participation and systems of political authority*, rooted in the characteristics of these civilisational structures. In this case, the (kinship, communal, working) community, which is the condition for individuality and political practice, is understood as the responsibility and obligation of the individual for the symbolic, economic, ritual and cultural reproduction of the community's trajectory.

In the liberal model, in contrast, individuality is the point of departure for constructing the community, and for this to occur, the concrete collective structures that introduce a different sense of belonging and participation must have previously disappeared. This, in turn, requires that capitalist relations of production be widespread, which in Bolivia occurs in a limited and non-majority, though dominant, fashion.

2. A multinational and multicivilisational state

How can we change this incongruence between the country's state-life and its socio-economic composition? The option that we propose, here, is to stop simulating political modernity and cultural homogeneity in what is a predominantly premodern, multicivilisational and pluricultural society. This means breaking with the schizophrenia of a few élites who, for centuries, have dreamed of being modern and white, who copy modern institutions and laws in order to apply them in a society in which the indigenous are the majority and where market- and organisational modernity is non-existent for more than half the population, and will continue to be so in the coming decades.

The *de facto* existence of multiple ethnic identities in the country and the historical substantiation of the state's gelatinous character, which permanently threaten social systems weakly integrated into a régime of long-term normative legitimacy, demands that we deal seriously and openly with the debate about ethnicities, cultural communities and stateless nations⁴⁴ as decisive political and territorial subjects for creating and establishing any long-lasting state-order in the country.

With the recognition of ethnic, cultural and linguistic identities in most of the territory, which includes the majority of the population, there are various options that can be pursued. The first is to deny or to simulate a recognition of this diversity while developing policies of extinction, either by the coercive exclusion of these identities, or by their symbolic devaluation, leading to strategies of ethnic self-denial. In a strict sense, this is the state-policy that has been applied over the last hundred years, with several 'soft' variants over the last decade, but whose result is a constant reconstitution of the excluded identities and the rise of Indianist projects favouring secession from Bolivia.

Another option is to strengthen projects of indigenous national autonomy, which could produce the formation of new states of majority-indigenous composition. This could be the case, for example, with Aymara-speakers, the cultural community that has undertaken the greatest amount of work towards ethnic politicisation in recent decades, producing a nationally based body-politic in addition to possessing a demographic density potentially sufficient to make these proposals of political self-determination viable. These kinds of political programmes have begun to be revitalised in recent years, especially in the Aymara area, and they indicate a radically different model from the rest of the continent's indigenous movements. This path should not surprise us, since, ultimately, a nationality is a deterritorialised ethnicity, or, we could say, a nation

44. Guibernau 1996.

is an ethnicity successfully identified with a territory,⁴⁵ establishing a political system of state-sovereignty based on this ethnicity. The difference between an ethnicity and a nation lies only in that the latter has undertaken a process of structuring an institutionalised political community by means of a state-régime. When an ethnicity becomes autonomous from a system of domination, it develops into a nation, and the set of indigenous struggles and demands advanced in recent decades by the Aymara people makes them a potential candidate for the constitution of a nation-state identity.

A third option, devoid of cultural trauma, would be to design a new state-structure capable of integrating into the entire institutional framework, into the distribution of powers and into normative systems, these two great aspects of the Bolivian social character: ethnic-cultural diversity and the civilisational plurality of the symbolic and technico-procedural systems that are part of the organisation of the collective sphere. In terms of a régime of citizenship-rights and democratic practices, this would mean the constitution of a multinational and multicivilisational state.

a) *The multinational or multicultural dimension of the political community*

It is clear that one of the pillars of state-construction, capable of reconciling the state with society and putting an end to cultural exclusion, is a profound state-reform enabling, in global, normative terms, a recognition of social multiculturalism and, as a result, of the need to construct a multinational politico-institutional state-framework. To this end, political theory and different international experiences offer a series of experiences and reflections that merit a brief synthesis, such that they can be related to the logic of place, in this case with the set of social possibilities and resources present in Bolivian reality.

In the early twentieth century, the debate about the political and territorial rights of cultural identities, peoples, ethnicities and stateless nation-building⁴⁶ was approached with respect to the need, or not, for the self-determination for the peoples or nations that desired a state. The greatest contributions in this area came from socialist thought,⁴⁷ although there were also similar contributions from liberal thought. Immanuel Wallerstein has shown that the policy of US presidents Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt supporting the self-determination of nations in the Balkans and in Russia was applying the liberal

45. Oommen 1997.

46. Keating 2001.

47. Bauer 2000; Lenin 1972; Luxemburg 1976.

principle of individual suffrage to the sphere of state-sovereignty in the global political sphere.⁴⁸

During the 1970s and 1980s, the debate in political theory was between liberals and communitarians. During this stage, the liberals were opposed to rights for oppressed nations and/or minorities, because this diverted attention away from individual autonomy, considered to be central when it came to deciding about well-being,⁴⁹ while the communitarians saw 'minority'-rights as a way to protect a form of life in common that is over and above individual choices.⁵⁰

There has been a proliferation, in recent years, of discussions about the rights of stateless nations and ethnicities, both in the context of pluralist institutional construction and in that of philosophical reflection about the scope and fairness of these rights.⁵¹

Charles Taylor, questioning the existence of neutral ethnocultural states able to offer the same conditions for development to differently-perceived cultures, considers that the recognition of rights for different cultural communities allows a need for social visibility to be satisfied, which, far from opposing the individual freedoms recognised for all, creates a solid and equitable base for exercising these freedoms.⁵² Will Kymlicka, assuming that these cultural entities do not demand rights that protect them from modernity, but rather assuming quite the opposite, that they demand access to liberal institutions, considers that the collective rights they demand promote the extension of liberal values within these communities, and hence, from the point of view of liberal philosophy, there is no reason to oppose these collective rights.⁵³ Moreover, he considers that those cultural communities that face disadvantages with respect to the preservation of their culture put the individuals that compose it at a disadvantage, breaking the democratic principle of equality in cohabitation. In order to preserve this principle of equality, he suggests that it is necessary to recognise special collective rights, allowing their life-skills and potentials to be balanced with the rest of the people in the society.⁵⁴

There are those who think that recognising 'minority' cultural and ethnic identities is a reactionary proposal,⁵⁵ while there are liberals who consider that recognising these collective rights fosters social disintegration, which could give way to a spiral of mutual competition and confrontation between different

48. Wallerstein 1995.

49. Narveson 1991.

50. Johnston 1989.

51. Pfaff 1993.

52. Taylor 1992; also see Taylor 1991.

53. Kymlicka 2001; also see Kymlicka 1995a.

54. Kymlicka 1995b; also Kymlicka 2001.

55. Dahrendorf 1995.

'ethnicities'.⁵⁶ However, as Kymlicka has recently shown, there is evidence that, on the contrary, recognising the self-government of national minorities contributes to the stability and cohesion of states.⁵⁷

In Latin America, the debate about indigenous peoples' rights has been extensive, and constantly linked to the action of the states or indigenous social movements and politicians. Leaving aside the integrationist, statist, indigenist interpretation of the 1940s and 1950s,⁵⁸ the different interpretations proposed since the 1970s, in the wake of a resurgence of indigenous social and political movements, have gone from the vindication of 'anti-Western' Indian governments, crossing many republican state-borders,⁵⁹ to the recognition of local community-rights and the formation of regional autonomies with greater or lesser degrees of self-determination.⁶⁰

In the wake of the indigenous uprising in Chiapas, the political and theoretical discussion with respect to systems of autonomy has considerably matured. Due to the complexity of ethnic diversity in Mexico, but also because of its already reduced proportion of indigenous people as compared to the whole of the Mexican population, these interpretations have placed greater emphasis on the rights of ethnic minorities⁶¹ than on the rights of stateless national majorities. We will return to part of this debate and its contributions later.

In general terms, the political recognition of different cultural or national identities within the state can exhibit differing degrees with respect to institutional 'density' and 'hierarchy'. In the case of institutional 'hierarchy', political rights can simply remain in the local, community-sphere, or they can include meso- or regional factors or, ultimately, extend to the macro- or largest structure in the state-administration, such as the executive, the parliament or the highest court. How far recognising the rights of nationalities goes will depend on the strength of their internal political cohesion, the openness of the state and the democratic expectations of the rest of the social communities that exist within it.

With respect to the complex of rights, these can range from the recognition of property-rights for land and natural resources to territorial rights and negotiated political sovereignties over certain resources. Similarly, they can range from the contingent recognition of the presence of members of excluded cultures at some level of the state-apparatus, to the construction of a 'societal culture', understood as a territorially concentrated culture, based on a shared language that is used

56. Ward 1991.

57. Kymlicka 1998.

58. Aguirre Beltrán 1991.

59. Reinaga 1969; Alcina (ed.) 1990.

60. Díaz Polanco 1985; 1991; Bate 1984; Díaz Polanco and Sánchez 2001.

61. Díaz Polanco and Sánchez 2001.

in political and social institutions, in public as well as private life – government, schools, law, economy, public employment and the media.⁶² In general terms, citizenship is the inclusion of a person as a competent member of a political community with a set of practical, legal, economic and political practices defined as rights.⁶³ This assumes the existence of a set of common ends and values that can constitute a lasting political community that is, in general, the fruit of economic homogenisation-processes with respect to solid industrial and market-economies, in addition to extensive processes of cultural integration. In multiethnic or multinational societies, the political community can only be constructed with mechanisms that, without eliminating people's *cultural particularity*, can ensure that they have the same opportunities and rights to constitute a part of the institutional political set-up. In order to allow this, some authors have proposed a *differentiated citizenship*,⁶⁴ which allows the exercise of full political rights for those that belong to a specific ethnic-cultural or national community within the state itself. In this way, excluded ethnic-national identities would have institutional means guaranteeing their representation as cultural identities in political institutions, including the capacity to issue a collective veto to any decision that could affect the ethnic community.

The political community, as a site of citizenship, would, therefore, be a process of collective construction, in which different excluded ethnic identities would be seen as communities and have their community-rights and power recognised. This differentiated citizenship could take on several forms, such as the autonomous state or the multinational state.

Some local authors have considered that a multicultural or multinational state would go against the 'idea' of the democratic foundation of the state, based on universal citizenship or '*demos*'. In this case, one cannot help but be concerned about the ignorance of these 'critics' with respect to the abundant academic debate in political science on this issue. Intellectual currents that have never been suspected of any type of antidemocratic position, such as the communitarian liberals or the multiculturalist liberals, have been developing the topic of 'multinational democracy' for over a decade, as part of efforts to extend the democratic basis for modern states in multicultural societies. Indeed, reality demonstrates that not only have recently decolonised societies advanced in the formation of a democratic state with multinational institutions (India, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa), but so too have highly industrialised societies with long-lasting

62. Kymlicka 1998.

63. On citizenship, see Marshall and Bottomore 1987; Habermas 1996b; Tilly (ed.) 1996; Held 1995.

64. Young 1990; Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995a; Baumann 1999; Villoro 1998. For a mild critique of these interpretations, see Sartori 2001.

democratic traditions (Belgium, Switzerland and Canada). With close to eight thousand ethnocultural groups in the world, and only around two hundred states, it is clear that more than ninety percent of modern states must deal with some type of majority- or minority-multiculturalism in their territories.

It is incoherent, therefore, to separate *ethnos* and *demos*, because strictly speaking, any *demos* is also an *ethnos*. When it comes down to it, the exercise of 'universal citizenship' implies a language for public education, for accessing higher state-functions and public services, and it implies history, heroes, festivals and commemorations adapted to the historical narrative of a particular culture, which inevitably promotes a particular cultural identity above and beyond other identities. This is precisely what occurs in Bolivia, where, even though close to 45 percent of the people speak an indigenous language as their mother-tongue and 62 percent self-identify as indigenous, there is a hierarchical linguistic market that favours Spanish, there is an ethnically stratified labour-market, public office is monocultural and Spanish-speaking *mestizo* ethnicity plays the role of a capital that helps to produce social class-structuring. In multicultural societies, no state is neutral, and no *demos* results from the procedural rules of liberal democracy. It has always been the result of cultural impositions, dominations and ethnic exclusions.

The debate about multinational democracy seeks to understand *demos* not as a 'political nation', but rather as a 'political community', and one that can, therefore, be produced as the multicultural or multinational articulation of a culturally plural society. When *demos* is confused with 'political nation', we have a type of ethnocentrism that attributes universal values to what are simply the particular values, knowledge and practices of a dominant culture that is the result of colonisation and war.

Hiding this fact inside the assumptions of an ethnocentric universalism,⁶⁵ refusing to seek better democratic alternatives, is the precise expression of a type

65. We must remember that the social sciences clarified a long time ago that many of the so-called modern 'universal values' are arbitrarily, historically chosen, the result of specific balances of material and discursive forces that transformed local and partial values and interests into general values – first 'local' ones and then 'universal' ones. As Richard Rorty reminds us, the fact that out of an attachment to one's capacity for reasoning and argument one can have a moral commitment to these values does not elude an understanding of their contingency and temporality. See Rorty 1991.

The mystification of 'universalisms' as the norm, beyond society and its capacity for argumentative reflection, is not only intellectually untenable; it is also an ideological sham behind which old and new authoritarianisms lurk (yesterday's 'actually-existing socialism', today's 'free-market economy'). Even so, multicultural democracies and ethnocultural assertions do not necessarily contradict the exercise of the currently predominant 'universal' values of equality, tolerance and individual liberty. As the liberal Kymlicka has already pointed out, the collective rights to self-government of dominated or colonised peoples and nationalities are the best way to defend the 'societal culture

of mental colonisation that reinforces the continuity of ethnicised and racialised colonial state-institutions such as those of the Bolivian state. And this, far from encouraging the internal 'cohesion' of a society that has never been united, despite all the monocultural state's liberalising and modernising tricks, reinforces the structures of cultural and ethnic domination, thus provoking greater possibilities of ethno-national rebellions over the long term. In this sense, the multinationalisation or multiculturalisation of the state does not ethnicise the state, as the state is always ethnicised, as much as it might cloak itself in its respect for 'universal rights'. What state-multinationality does is break the monopoly over the ethnicity of the state, allowing other dominated and excluded ethnicities to share the structures of social recognition and political power.

In the Bolivian case, the existence of two large linguistic communities (Aymara and Quechua), one of them with a high degree of nationality-based politicisation (Aymara), in addition to the existence of several dozen smaller linguistic and cultural communities, tells of the existence of a multiplicity of cultural communities with goals and values that are different from the dominant and majoritarian national identity – the Bolivian identity. However, the country's multicultural complexity is not expressed in the administrative structures of the state, which remain monocultural, monolingistic and monoethnic, radically limiting the exercise of citizenship and of democratic rights.

One way to begin to solve this conflict between the cultural plurality of society and the ethnic monopolisation of the state, which reproduces discrimination and colonial rule, lies precisely in undertaking processes of asymmetric and differentiated recognition of national and ethnic identities, at the macro- and regional scales. Of course, in the case of Bolivia, not every cultural community distinct from the Bolivian one is national; there are smaller and less politicised cultural identities, especially in the eastern region of the country, whose political recognition by the state requires different organisational procedures than those of the national cultural communities, such as the Aymara community, which requires a substantial modification to the general organisational structure of the state.

It is necessary, therefore, to guarantee cohabitation with a negotiated conception of power articulating plurality in a shared political unit within a differentiated society; that is, some communities are national and others are not. The first step toward this is to grant *regional autonomies by linguistic and cultural community* with different levels of political self-government, depending on the political density and territorial scope of the cultural identities making demands.

of each people', as these provide the 'context of individual choice' for the options and evaluations of equality and freedom, which are precisely the foundation of modern citizenship.

Following Donald Rothchild and Caroline Hartzell, we understand autonomy to be an institutional arrangement that,

delimits a regionally-based, self-administering entity or entities within a state as having explicit policy-making responsibilities in one or more political, economic and cultural spheres ... The aim of territorial autonomy is to cede responsibilities over specified subjects, and in some cases, a certain degree of self-determination, to a group that constitutes the majority in a specific region.⁶⁶

Only with different forms of self-government can different cultures find a space for recognition, validation and development, as self-government allows the structuring of a system of political institutions capable of positively embracing and disciplining the cultural practices of the community (language, dress, customs, and so on) and creating a field of administrative, economic and cultural competences based on linguistic homogeneity.

In peasant-indigenous regions in the *altiplano*, the valleys and the tropics, these structures of certain forms of local self-government have existed *de facto*, at the level of communities, agricultural unions and groups of communities,⁶⁷ since long before Bolivia was a republic. But there is no high-level structure of self-government connecting various communities or the hundreds or thousands of communities and urban neighbourhoods that are members of a large linguistic and cultural community, such that, when the members of these cultural communities join the various governmental systems of economic, educational, bureaucratic, police or military administration, they must do so by abandoning their cultural knowledge (linguistic, oral, and so on) and forcibly using the ambiguously learned language, knowledge and customs of the dominant cultural identity that regulates state-administration. This is the case for any comunero or resident in an Aymara- or Quechua-speaking neighbourhood who wishes to register their title to a property: they have to use exclusively Spanish to submit the request, complete the paperwork and to obtain the property-rights. All those with an indigenous language as their mother-tongue have to experience the same linguistic and cultural schizophrenia; the parent dealing with the principal or a teacher at the school, the urban merchant at the town-hall, the union-leader dealing with road-services, the business-person at customs, the student dealing with a university-professor, or the resident having to pay for electricity and water-services.

Popular Participation, it must be recognised, not so much intentionally as because of the communities themselves, has enabled several town-councils to

66. Rothchild and Hartzell 2000, pp. 259–60.

67. Carter and Mamani 1982; Rivera 1993.

partially modify linguistic practices in the bureaucratic administration. Because of political organising by peasant-unions, some mayors and administrative staff speak indigenous languages in their interactions with voters in the regions, and, in some cases, they are subject to forms of social control practiced by the indigenous communities.⁶⁸ However, in all these cases, we can only talk about low-intensity forms of municipal self-government, to the extent that these authorities only have municipal competences, while the decisive ones, demarcated and decided upon by the central government, are monopolised by the dominant monoethnic communities. This would help to explain why, despite the accomplishments achieved with the municipalisation of Bolivian territory, the occupation of some town-councils by indigenous communities, and the very formation of indigenous municipalities,⁶⁹ they have not been able to create a field of cultural and political competences around an indigenous linguistic homogeneity. Of course, if it is just a matter of executing the normative directives decided upon by Spanish-speaking *mestizo* communities, and the rest of the governmental functions at the local, regional and higher levels are based on the use of the Spanish language, then the indigenous language remains a merely local and private language, without any possibility of making social mobility and full citizenship viable. The introduction of indigenous languages into some governmental offices and services would not solve the problem, as they would continue to be officially marginal languages, still lacking the rank of officially practiced languages; that is, languages for the full exercise of citizenship, social mobility and competition for high-ranking legitimate public posts.

The recognition of forms of self-government in territories demarcated by language-communities would be a type of *jura singularia* immediately permitting the creation of a field of competences and the accumulation of political, cultural, economic, educational and bureaucratic capital, based on a linguistic homogeneity that would revalue and give state-legitimation to the various indigenous languages. In the process, a 'societal culture' would be created; that is, a territorially concentrated culture, based on a shared language, used in a broad range of social institutions of both public and private life (education, government, economy, media, taxation, and so on). The importance of constructing these societal cultures lies in that, without promoting secession,⁷⁰ it would offer recognition that other cultural communities have the same rights as the

68. Blanes 2000; Albó 1999b.

69. Pacheco 2002.

70. On the right to secession, see Norman 2001.

currently dominant cultural community practiced in its process of nation-building, because, in the strict sense, every nation-state is a societal culture.⁷¹

Now, the characteristics of the self-government of cultural and/or linguistic communities can vary according to territorial scope, cultural identity, demographic identity and the degrees of ethnic and national pollination across the different communities. In the case of small ethnic identities, a minimum level of regional self-government that can guarantee the development of the culture, multicultural citizenship and the democratic exercise of various political rights likely to put an end to the current exclusivism would have to recognise:

- a) The right of the indigenous peoples, and not only of the communities, to self-determination, and, therefore, to political autonomy as part of the Bolivian state.⁷² This entails the possibility that various indigenous communities, *ayllus* or larger ethnic identities, such as the Laymes and Qakachacas, could join together to produce an autonomous region with regional monoethnic or pluriethnic indigenous self-government.
- b) The election of executive authorities and the formation of structures of regional deliberation by the cultural communities that result from the federation of indigenous peoples and ethnicities. The provincial federations and the federations of *ayllus*, with their *cabildo* systems or their alternative systems for the individual election of representatives, could fulfil this role of minimal regional government.
- c) The preservation of the principle of balanced ethnic proportionality and representation in the formation of autonomous regional governments, in order to prevent one ethnic group or linguistic community from imposing itself on another.
- d) The integration of non-indigenous inhabitants of cities or neighbourhoods included within the autonomous territory as subjects of the same individual and collective rights in the shaping of regional systems of authority.
- e) Autonomous territorial jurisdiction, with administrative responsibilities negotiated with and differentiated from the state in the educational and legal spheres, in agrarian property-ownership and in the management and protection of natural resources (water, forests, flora, fauna, and mineral resources).

71. Examples of these forms of autonomy for cultural communities in special territories exist in Finland in the Åland region, in Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain, in the Azores and Madeira islands in Portugal, and soon in England with the territories of Northern Ireland and Scotland. On this, see Aja 1999. A study about the limits to applying this model of state organisation is presented in Mazaffar and Scarritt 2002.

72. For an extensive debate about the ambiguity of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Working Group's declaration with respect to the recognition of the right of 'peoples' to self-determination, see Clavero 1994.

This implies a redefinition of territoriality, in order to articulate state-sovereignty with the property rights and indigenous sovereignty that existed prior to the republican state.

- f) Access to state-funds under the principles of equity and solidarity, so that the regions most impoverished due to previous extractions and exclusions can participate in the state-regulated common good.
- g) The participation of autonomous regions based on cultural and/or linguistic communities in general- and higher-level decision-making. The redistribution of uninominal seats to allow the creation of districts related to autonomous regions and ethnocultural communities could allow precisely this articulation between the micro- and macro-levels of the state's multicultural organisation.⁷³

This form of regional autonomy could be implemented among relatively small cultural and linguistic communities such as those in the east, with different linguistic or ethnic communities that could together build a more solid autonomous region; but also between more or less compact ethnic identities, such as those in northern Potosí and Sucre; or between several different ethnic identities that have the same language, such as the Quechua-speaking cultural communities, which, despite a shared linguistic base, display an often insurmountable diversity of identities.

But, simultaneously, there is at least one linguistic and cultural community of national scale and quality – the Aymara – whose process of internal politicisation and nationally-based cohesion demands a more complex structure of autonomous self-government.

Because of the history of Aymara national construction;⁷⁴ the formation of an enduring autonomist political narrative; the consolidation of a nationalist élite with a great capacity for discursive reach; the persistence and expansion of its cultural repertoires; and its demographic importance, highly politicised through structures of collective action, such as the United Confederation of Peasant-Workers' Unions of Bolivia (CSUTCB) and the Indianist parties – the Indian Party, Tupac Katari Indian Movement (MITKA) and Tupac Katari Revolutionary Movement (MTRK) – along with their subsequent offshoots, and, most successfully, the Pachacuti Indigenous Movement (MIP); the demand for the political recognition of this national community would require at least the following characteristics of regional autonomous self-government:

73. On the origin of some of these points, see the extensive debate about indigenous autonomies that arose in Mexico as a result of the Zapatista uprising. In particular, see: AAVV 1994; 1996a; 1996b; 1997; 2001; Díaz Polanco and Sánchez 2001.

74. Albó 1988; García Linera 2003.

- a) The right of the Aymara nationality, not just the right of the communities, to self-determination, and, therefore, to political autonomy as part of the Bolivian state.
- b) Constitutional recognition of regional autonomy for linguistic communities, in order to guarantee state-recognition of the equality of cultures beyond the current conjuncture. Any reform to the constitution would necessarily require majority-participation and approval by the autonomous region. At the same time, the autonomous region would have its own constitutional normative régime, considered to be the basic law of the autonomous region, although with a rank just below that of the Bolivian state's political constitution.
- c) An Aymara executive and national legislative chamber, from which the executive of the autonomous régime would be elected. This assembly, which would carry out its functions in the continuous territorial jurisdiction of the (urban-rural) Aymara-speaking region, would be directly elected by the members of the cultural community itself, and would be responsible only to this community.
- d) An autonomous government with total political responsibility for the primary and higher educational system, public administration, land-registration, the media, taxes, public works, tourism, commerce, industry, transportation, housing, internal trade, the environment, civil law, the police,⁷⁵ and natural resources such as water, forests, flora, fauna, mining resources, and so on. Issues like labour-laws, intellectual and industrial property, ownership of hydrocarbon-resources and market-regulations could be shared responsibilities between the autonomous community and the state.⁷⁶ As in the previous case, this implies redefining the meaning of territoriality, in order to combine state-sovereignty with the property-rights and indigenous sovereignty that existed prior to the republican state.
- e) Stable and predictable funding for the functioning of the autonomous régime. This could be achieved by committing the income from certain taxes to the domain of the autonomous region, as well as by applying the principle of equity and state-solidarity by means of the conditional or unconditional

75. In Germany's case, eighty percent of police-staff are employed by the *Länder*, or autonomous regions, while only twenty percent are under the purview of the federal state. In Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain, the autonomous regions' police tend to be the only police with responsibility for the security of citizens in the region concerned, with the exception of control over cross-community services such as borders, airports, and so on, where there are state-police with special powers. In this respect, see Aja 1999.

76. Aja 1999.

transfer of resources from the state for the regular functioning of the autonomous administration.⁷⁷

- f) The integration of non-indigenous minorities from cities and neighbourhoods included within the autonomous Aymara territory as subject to the same individual and collective rights in the shaping of regional systems of authority. Recognition of the minority-rights of non-Aymara-speaking cultural communities, with the possibility of accessing educational systems that preserve their own cultural identity. The metropolitan area of La Paz, which is an enclave in the middle of an Aymara-speaking cultural territory, could be dealt with in one of two ways.

On one hand, the recognition of a special statute establishing it as an autonomous territorial region, like the city of Brussels in Belgium,⁷⁸ with bilingual status embedded in the structure of self-government such that the legislative chamber proportionally represents the number of members of society who belong to the Aymara linguistic community and to the Spanish-speaking linguistic community. This proportion should also be maintained in the regional executive, with the exception of the regional president. This would permit a local distribution of the administration of regional responsibilities in the city, based on cultural and linguistic affinity. Another option would be for the city of La Paz and members of neighbouring areas, if they wish to be included because of their cultural affinity, to remain as a non-contiguous part of the Spanish-speaking cultural community, with the status of a municipal régime similar to what currently exists, as with the rest of the cities and agricultural areas that do not see themselves as having indigenous cultural identities.

This set of minimal rules would permit an immediate revalorisation of indigenous cultures, a democratic extension of social participation in the structures of state-power, and, most substantially, the political equality of cultures, with a fair and positive ethnicisation of specific state-structures. In this way, the Aymara language and culture would have a system of public institutions ensuring their development and positively sanctioning their public and private use, and a regional-national framework would be formed that would provide economic-administrative legitimation for their knowledge and use.

In a strict sense, this would be the establishment of a large-scale social space that would ensure a régime of aptitude, competence and accumulation of different types of capital⁷⁹ (economic, political, cultural, social, state, union, and

77. On the different ways to finance the system of autonomous regions, see Seijas 2003.

78. Caminal 2002; Peeters 1994.

79. Bourdieu 1984.

so on), based on linguistic and cultural homogeneity. To put it another way, the development of an Aymara societal culture would be based on conditions of normative-political development equal to those of the Spanish-speaking *mestizo* societal culture.⁸⁰

80. Recently, Félix Patzi criticised our proposal for indigenous autonomies in the book *Sistema comunal* (Patzi 2004). He thinks that the system of autonomies does not affect the core of the régime of capital, and thus that the demand for a system of autonomies is not revolutionary. Patzi's first error lies in that he confuses the issue of cultural identities with the issue of civilisational diversity. While the former refers to the existence of several linguistic or cultural identities in the same territory, indiscriminately including different productive logics (capitalist, communitarian, family-based, and so on) and different social classes (communards, business-owners, workers, peasants, and so on), the latter refers to the overlapping of different societal, productive, organisational, political and symbolic logics (for instance, market-industrial civilisation and communal civilisation). The dismantling of the relations of ethnocultural domination, as demonstrated by the political history of other countries, is not necessarily an anti-capitalist event, and much less so a socialist one. Indeed, in general, this occurs within modern social processes of democratisation and decolonisation that form a part of capitalist development, which does not mean that, in the Bolivian case, their extinction would not be a gigantic decolonising revolution in political and economic relations. In contrast, dismantling the relations of civilisational domination would affect the expansion of the capitalist régime itself, and though this can intersect with the issue of cultural domination, it has its own internal dynamic. Studying to what extent it is possible to move forward in the transformation of relations of civilisational domination is an issue that cannot be carried out as a matter of will, but rather must emerge from studying the structure of the real and potential forces of contemporary social struggle.

Patzi's second error is that, although the indigenous are the 'majority', this is a circumstantial majority, to the extent that it depends on the strength of indigenous identity-construction, which is a political and historical matter and not a natural, physical one. Moreover, in a strict sense, the indigenous majority is a sum total of different indigenous cultural and national minorities – Aymaras, Quechuas, Guaranis, Mojeños, and so on. Even in the case of the Quechuas, more than having a shared identity in the way that the Aymaras do, they have a set of quite fragmented territorial and local identities, which makes it impossible to speak of a real, socially mobilisable Quechua majority. In a strict sense, Aymaras, Quechuas, Guaranis and so on, as well as the *mestizos*, in terms of mobilised sociocultural identities, are all 'minorities' with respect to the others, which justifies even further the need for modes of territorial self-government where these are the majority, and their subsequent combination at the macro-level in a régime of higher, multinational institutions.

In the third place, the possibility of affecting capitalist society and the possibility of building a communitarian society are not matters of bookish logic, but rather of historical logic. Capitalism is not transcended by mere theoretical deduction from a conceptual framework, such as Patzi does, but rather by following the actual 'movement going on before our own eyes' The fact that social communitarianism could overcome capitalism is a fact that has to be analysed in historical events and in the actual struggles of communities, and Patzi has not been able to corroborate any of this. The error of Patzi's position lies in confusing the proposal of a long-term, theoretical and willfully emancipatory model with a politically conjunctural proposal dependent upon the balance of existing and potential forces, as suggested in our proposal for indigenous autonomies. Additionally, it is clear that the peasant-rationality of family- (as opposed to communal) work, applied to industrial production, which is essentially Patzi's 'emancipatory'

Depending on the extent of the ethnic integration and politicisation of the Quechua-speaking cultural identities, it is theoretically possible to think about the formation of a second large-scale autonomous government, based on the most prevalent linguistic community in the country – Quechua.

But if these forms of indigenous self-government at the local, regional or national level are not to create centrifugal processes that foment separatist tendencies in the Bolivian state, and, furthermore, if they are to complete the ethnic demonopolisation of the macro- or overall structure of the Bolivian state in order to consolidate high-level recognition of the indigenous cultural communities and linguistic regions, then these processes of constructing autonomies must simultaneously include a redistribution of responsibilities between the state and the autonomous government, and a real and proportional presence of the indigenous cultural communities in the composition of the institutions and powers that regulate the highest political community of the Bolivian state.

In the case of the Aymara national community, this could be fulfilled by:

- a) Reforming the Bolivian state in order to democratically establish its unity, and preserve politico-cultural diversity by constitutionally integrating regional politico-indigenous communities in a new higher political community, in which power is shared and divided between a general government with national responsibilities and constituent governments with regional or sub-national responsibilities. This therefore implies two vertically organised spheres of government: the state-government and autonomous governments. In the event that departmental autonomies are established in Spanish-speaking areas, in line with the territorial reconfiguration of the state brought about by the indigenous autonomies, these régimes of departmental governments could also be included in this new vertical ordering of Bolivian state-powers.
- b) The representation and participation of the autonomous community in the organisations of the overall state-government, in the upper and lower chambers as well as in the ministries.
- c) In the case of the lower chamber, made up of representatives of the entire nation and with responsibility for state-administration, a presence of Aymara representatives according to the proportion of Aymaras in the total number of Bolivia's inhabitants – approximately twenty-five to thirty percent, implying control of a total of twenty-five to thirty percent of the seats in the overall parliament. With respect to the other indigenous autonomous communities

proposal, entails little or nothing of a real communitarianisation of the conditions of social reproduction.

such as those in the east, the principle of over-representation could be established in order to favour the presence of small cultural communities.⁸¹

- d) In the case of the upper chamber, which represents the departments, an equal proportional presence of the autonomous governments following the principles of equality and institutional symmetry. In both the lower and the upper chambers, the principle of a 'double mandate'⁸² could be established, such that some parliamentarians elected for the autonomous parliament would also be directly present in the state-parliament.
- e) In the case of the state-executive, proportional presence of the main linguistic communities (Spanish, Aymara, Quechua) in the composition of the cabinet, in order to bring the country's linguistic diversity and the balance of rights of the most important linguistic communities to the very forefront of the executive. This, of course, does not rule out party-competition, but it forces the party-system itself to become multicultural, or to establish multicultural party-alliances in order to be able to govern.

Ultimately, this is about culturally constituting a *consociational* government (*consociation* with consensus),⁸³ or a responsive plurinational federative government⁸⁴ able to articulate a balanced representation of all the linguistic cultures and communities in the institutional structure, both in the core state and in spaces of local and regional government. This would thus extend the scope of official recognition, valorisation and social legitimacy of the most important indigenous languages, and, consequently, it would enhance their capacity to be used as legitimate languages in the context of the state; that is, as linguistic capital suitable for obtaining posts in public administration, in the administration of the central government, in the economic leadership of the country, and so on.

The possibility of structuring overall systems of government based on the proportional distribution of positions according to linguistic community would break with the monoculturalism of the current Bolivian state and extend the validity of the principal indigenous languages to the level of the highest state-structure, thus making possible the political equality of cultures and languages as parallel and balanced mechanisms for social advancement and citizenship.

Finally, this administrative political equality of the Spanish language and the Aymara and Quechua languages would initiate the structural process of dissolving the colonial legacy, which made ethnicity a capital. As such, (*mestizo* Spanish-speaking) language or culture would cease to be a 'bonus' on top of the

81. Lijphart 1998.

82. Pas 2001.

83. Lijphart 1998.

84. Caminal 2002.

efficacy and extent of the other types of capital in social class-structuring, access to goods, labour-supply and the possibilities of gaining access to positions of power in the central state.

b) *The multicivilisational dimension of the political community*

But the problem that needs solving in the country is not only that of the multiculturalism or multinationality of its members. It is also that of the diversity of political systems and technologies with which people take on the exercise and broadening of their public rights. Citizenship is a state of society's political self-awareness and self-organisation that is recognised as legitimate by the laws of the state. The problem arises when the state prescribes a set of norms, of exclusive ways in which citizens can express and practice this production of political dictates of public effect, and revokes, denies or represses other ways, other institutional forms, other practices, political cultures and systems of authority.

There is not one single way of exercising political rights or of intervening in the management of the common good. Liberal democracy, by means of the individual vote, electoral competition, the formation of political elective communities and the political market,⁸⁵ is a form of democratically constituting citizenship, corresponding to societies that have undergone modern processes of individuation and that have eroded traditional normative loyalties and systems of aggregation (kinship, shared geographical origins, and so on). In general, this occurs in countries that have, in a majoritarian and dominant fashion, experienced industrial-economic processes that have replaced the peasant-, artisanal and communitarian economies that previously materially sustained the existence of normative forms of constituting the social group. In Bolivia, the economy displays such heterogeneity that scarcely twenty percent can be considered to be a modern market-industrial economy, while the rest is made up of traditional modes of technique and process, semi-market-oriented systems, anchored in a strong presence of occupational and communitarian systems in the organisation of production-processes. Hence, the forms of corporatist, occupational and communitarian affiliation are systems that constitute collective subjects, mainly practiced in cities and agrarian areas as modes of social affiliation, of conflict-resolution, of mediation and of political self-representation.

Now, it is true that these techniques of deliberative democracy, ethnic democracy and traditional corporatist citizenship, governed by moral and political parameters distinct from the liberal ones and made effective through associative and assembly-style, non-party institutions, have a predominantly local and regional existence. However, different moments in history have shown that these

85. Bobbio 1987; Dahl 1989.

systems can be combined into networks, into macro-systems of democracy that include thousands of communities and numerous occupational associations, engaging in large-scale democratic practices (provincial union-federations, federations or confederations of *ayllus*, roadblocks, electoral participation, and so on). With a little bit of effort and support, such as that given by the state to the parties so that they will not disappear, these non-liberal democratic practices could easily have a regular existence at the macro-state level.

Believing that liberal-style representative democracy is the only way to exercise political responsibility is to mistakenly suppose that Bolivia is an economically modern country in its technico-organisational structure, and that individuation is a majority-phenomenon, as these are prerequisites for implementing models of representative democracy.

In Bolivia, the normative collective identities of the neighbourhood, *ayllu*, community and occupational association largely precede any manifestation of individuality, and they are used daily to exercise social control, to make claims, to elect representatives, to present demands for equal rights, and to form a civic moral code of citizen-responsibility. However, these democratic institutions,⁸⁶ which have their own practices of deliberation, of accountability, of choosing authorities, of presenting demands, of shaping public opinion, of dissent and consent, of establishing the political equality of its members – that is, for exercising democratic rights in a substantive sense – are not currently taken into consideration by the state, which, on the contrary, makes systematic, authoritarian efforts to discipline all of these other expressions of social democratisation such that they will fit the liberal-democratic moulds.

These different political techniques, these systems of peasant-indigenous⁸⁷ and urban-plebeian⁸⁸ authority, form part of the complex, multicivilisational fabric of Bolivian reality. They are also visible in other social practices, such as those revealed in the understanding and exercise of *ayllu* justice,⁸⁹ in Andean (textile and braided)⁹⁰ writing, in the predominance of textual repertoires (orality, visualisation, tactile, and so on),⁹¹ in the management of collective resources,⁹² in the management of family-rights tied to political responsibilities.⁹³

86. For a discussion on the democratic act that goes beyond the liberal procedural and minimalist perspective, see Rancière 1999; Tapia 2002a.

87. Rivera 1993; Spedding and Llanos 1999.

88. García Linera 2001a.

89. Fernández 2000; 2003. See also the ten books on community justice prepared by the Bolivian Ministry of Justice and Human Rights in 1999.

90. Translator's note: textile and braided are an old Andean writing systems.

91. Arnold and De Dios Yapita 2000.

92. Gerbrandy and Hoogendam 1998.

93. Spedding and Llanos 1999.

The possibility of real political equality in society therefore depends on a suppression of the mono-organisational structure of the current Bolivian state, which has simply recognised and institutionalised the forms emerging from the dominant and minoritarian (mercantile-industrial) civilisation as the only legitimate institutions for the political exercise of (citizenship- and liberal-democratic) rights. Substantial political equality between cultures and identities requires equality in the forms of producing policy at all levels of governmental administration (general, regional and local); that is, the equality of political practices, of political institutions and of different systems of political authority belonging to the different cultural communities and civilisational régimes that coexist within the Bolivian territory.

This composition of political institutions and forms coming from different civilisational or societal matrices, which coexist in conditions of equality, has been termed *mestizo* politics by Luis Tapia,⁹⁴ and is capable of creating solid and extensive processes of democratisation and citizenship-formation.

To the extent that these different forms of technical and organisational political production belong to different civilisational régimes, their historical rhythms and time are heterogeneous; hence it is necessary to think about a specific synchrony for short periods, such that 'their presence, strength, opinion and decision can be included in the overall deliberation and action'.⁹⁵ One example of these specific synchronies of civilisational political régimes is that, at the regional scale, in the towns of Chapare and northern Potosí, when choosing municipal authorities through parties and the individual vote (liberal régime), the decision to choose people for the council is made with agrarian-union and *ayllu* forms of deliberation and lobbying (corporatist or communal régime).

In this case, traditional institutional systems are combined with 'modern' ones. In some cases, this *de facto* composition of political institutions also occurs during elections for representatives to parliament, though this is an occasional occurrence that is upheld in exceptional circumstances of communitarian and *ayllu* politicisation and self-organisation. A democratic composition of different political institutions and forms would imply the regulation, expansion and institutionalisation of these local and ephemeral experiences of cross-civilisational combination. This could be regulated by means of the following measures:

- a) Constitutional recognition of political systems and systems of constituting authority practiced by peasant-communities, *ayllus*, neighbourhoods and unions (federations, confederations, associations), as legitimate systems for

94. Tapia 2002c.

95. Ibid.

election and decision-making in specific spheres of the government-system at the overall, regional and local levels.

- b) Legitimate spheres for electing representatives where these other systems of deliberation are applied would be: 1) representatives to parliament at the top level of the state (or the overall political community) in regions where these forms of political organisation are predominant or have a partial presence; 2) the parliaments of the autonomous regions of indigenous self-government. The proportional combination of elected representatives through parties or through corporatist structures would be negotiated, depending on the magnitude, history and presence of each one of these organisational forms, in each autonomous region and departmental constituency.
- c) Obligatory recognition, in the form of a sanction or veto, of their say on central issues of state-management (such as state-ownership of resources, overall public investment, and constitutional reform.
- d) Institutional recognition, carrying the force of state-law, of the communal forms of administering justice, of controlling collective resources and of medical knowledge regularly practiced by indigenous cultural communities. Extension to the regional and state-level of those institutions of bureaucratic and political administration that enable social legitimacy, regular learning, and the acquisition of resources for these practices.
- e) Constitutional recognition of systems for rotating authority, accountable to collective organisations (not only to individuals, as in the liberal régime) of the political authorities that make up the different levels of the state-hierarchy (municipalities, autonomous regions, departmental governments, the overall state).

A multicivilisational state would mean precisely the recognition of multiple mechanisms, multiple techniques and forms of understanding, practising and regulating society's democratic impulses, in accordance with the multiple forms of exercising citizenship deriving from the plurality of society's civilisational matrices.

As a result of the characteristics of its historical formation, Bolivia's complex social reality has produced various practices of democratic political behaviour. Thus, an effectively democratic state would require large-scale recognition, in the sphere of fundamental public-policy decision-making, of the institutional legitimacy of the different ways of practicing and understanding democracy. Such legitimacy would enhance awareness of the democratisation of political power. This is precisely the multi-institutional nature of the state-structure that, along with redefining legitimate ethnicities and the norms of territorial administration in accordance with ethnic practices and sovereignties, could produce a type of multinational and multicivilisational state.

If Bolivia is an overlapping of several cultures and several civilisations, then the state, as a synthesis, should be an institutionality capable of articulating and forming a political design developed with a proportional presence of linguistic cultures and identities, as well as with modern and traditional, deliberative, representative and assembly-type institutions in far-reaching, 'national' decision-making.

Administrative complexity

Given that overcoming the exclusion of indigenous cultural communities and their systems of authority will inevitably require the reform of the state, which would multiculturalise all public institutions and combine multiple organisational logics for political action in the different levels of government, it is clear that the preparation of administrative staff, in order to adapt to these complex tasks, would have to incorporate equally complex forms of training, of ethnic composition and of organisational abilities. In this respect, we can at least note the need for the following changes in the training of administrative staff, which would prepare them for the implementation of a multicultural and multicivilisational state:

- a) Processes of recruiting public officials in similar proportions to the number of public posts that every linguistic community utilises with respect to all state-administrative positions, at the micro- and regional levels as well as at the macro-level.
- b) Selection and ranking of staff according to meritocratic competition within each of the administrative segments chosen for their relevance to a linguistic community.
- c) Design of meritocratic promotional scales based not only on formal knowledge and bureaucratic rationalisation,⁹⁶ but also on knowledge of the organisational logic of indigenous cultures and the textual repertoires of non-market-industrial civilisations. To the extent that bureaucratic rationality is a product of the social internalisation of modern market- and factory-logic⁹⁷ in the regulation of legitimate state-administrative knowledge, the acceptance of a plurality of forms of recognising administrative merits would introduce the plurality of systems of authority and of knowledge of public administration into the workings of the state. This would mean the

96. Weber 1968a.

97. Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Elster 1998.

alternation or coexistence of several types of merit-based capital in the administrative profession and in governmental administration.

- d) Training, in preparation for administrative careers in government, in the country's three majority-languages.

This democratisation of bureaucratic-administrative training recognises indigenous languages as a legitimate means for gaining access to public roles and advancing within this sphere, and recognises a plurality of administrative practices and knowledge as valid routes for attaining merit.

Given that the extinction of ethnic discrimination will be a gradual process of structural state-reform, there are several ways to initiate this process. One possibility would be a reform 'from below', establishing indigenous forms of self-government in special territories at intermediate levels, which would then serve as experience for other regions. This would entail local initiative as well as the state's tolerance and support from the highest levels of leadership.

Another type of reform is 'top down', such that the decision to modify principal parts of the organisational architecture of the system of self-government would be made at the highest levels of the state, for this to then flow down to (autonomous) intermediate and micro- (local indigenous self-government) levels. This would require immediate constitutional reforms that would, for example, make the composition of Congress multicultural in the short term, as well as the working of some governmental agencies.

If, as we have seen above, the key to eroding processes of ethnic exclusion in multicultural societies lies in the equality of languages and cultural practices in the spheres of public administration, then, in order to officially legitimate all cultures by using them within these spheres and by creating conditions for the social mobility of the members of these cultures, it is necessary for the state, from the highest and broadest levels of self-government possible, to validate the majority-cultures, identified, in this case, as linguistic communities. For example, the normalised and regularised leadership of ministries by indigenous people and a gradually-implemented indigenous majority, and/or proportional distribution in the parliament according to linguistic affiliation. These measures would offer a signal from the state that indigenous languages are recognised as linguistic capital for holding public office, for real citizenship and for social mobility.

Together, all these transformations would mean that, in the sphere of legislative, judicial and executive powers, in addition to proportionally distributing overall and territory-wide administration in line with people's ethnic and linguistic origins, the forms of management, representation and social intervention would have to incorporate multiple composite political mechanisms, such as representative democracy, through parties; deliberative democracy, through

assemblies; communal democracy, through the normative action of communities and *ayllus*, and so on. This is, then, about combining at a macro-, general scale, modern institutions with traditional ones, and multicultural representation with general representation, in accordance with the multicultural and multicivilisational reality of Bolivian society. In other words, it is about seeking a political modernity based on what we really are, and not simulating what we can never be.

All this certainly points to a radical extension of democracy, to the extent that it creates real, equal possibilities of citizenship, both in the context of the collective rights of cultural identities and in the exercise of organisational practices for gaining access to public recognition. In turn, the radical nature of this process stems from the fact that it entails the dismantling of colonial and civilisational structures of domination that have persisted to the present day, not only since the birth of the republic, but going all the way back to the very beginning of indigenous colonisation in the sixteenth century – structures which have been dressed up over the centuries in different forms of imposed economic and political pseudo-modernisation.

V. Social-Movement Structures

Union, Multitude and Community: Social Movements and Forms of Political Autonomy in Bolivia¹

Liberal reforms and the reconstitution of the social fabric

Bolivia is a country marked by the fragility of its institutional structures and its marginal position in the international setting. But it is also a place where, perhaps for these same reasons, certain things tend to happen before they do in other places. In the 1950s, the country experienced a proletarian insurrection prior to the growth of the labour-movement that would soon take place in several other nations across the continent. Similarly, in the 1960s, the wave of authoritarian military rule came early to Bolivia, and, in the late 1970s, the country welcomed the return of democratic régimes. In 1984, five years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Bolivia saw the collapse of the prospects of the Left – forged over a period of forty years – due to the failure of the leftist coalition that led the country into economic bankruptcy. In the late 1980s, while other nations were seeking alternatives to statism and looming neoliberalism by means of populist governments, Bolivia plunged into a radical process of economic and cultural neoliberalisation, which led a whole generation of fervent, radical ‘socialists’ to become fervent, radical believers in the free market, ‘negotiated governance’ and privatisation.

1. Text excerpted from García Linera 2001a.

Over a period of fifteen years, these policies produced major social changes. Transnational corporations were granted control of 35 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), assigning the state the role of international beggar and local police-force, charged with disciplining the dangerous classes. Furthermore, the patterns of economic development were also changed. The producer-state gave way to foreign capital as the economic engine,² while local capitalists retreated to the role of junior partners, intermediaries or insignificant investors in subordinate areas of commercial and productive activity.

This has led to the development of a 'dualised'³ productive system. There are a handful of medium-sized companies with foreign capital, leading-edge technology and links to the global economic sphere, surrounded by a sea of small companies, family-shops and domestic units organised via multiple types of contracts and precarious labour to the few but dense business-centres. In this structure – in which economic enterprises become delocalised⁴ across infinite and minute productive and commercial activities – labour-relations are precarious, contracts are temporary, technology is scarce and the key to economic sustainability lies in the growing extortion of family-loyalties, a great mechanism for the hybrid commodification of the labour of children, the elderly, women and family-members.⁵

By replacing traditional urban and *campesino* structures and thus abandoning the ideal of 'modernisation', the new business-order has consciously and strategically subordinated the informal shop, home-based work and the kinship-networks of the subaltern classes to numerically controlled systems of production (industry and mining) and the monetary flows of foreign stock-markets (banking). The model of accumulation has thus become a hybrid one that unites, in a tiered and hierarchical manner, the production-structures of the fifteenth, eighteenth and twentieth centuries, with circuitous mechanisms of exaction and the colonial extortion of domestic, communal, artisan, *campesino* and small-business productive forces in Bolivian society. Though it has maintained the regulatory model and the model of economic accumulation based on the export of raw materials, weak industrial production for a paltry domestic market and the intensive use of labour as the main technical productive force in the labour-process, with production-management and the circulation of wealth taking on new forms, this baroque 'modernity' has reconfigured Bolivia's social class-structure, the forms of aggregation of subaltern sectors and collective identities.

2. Jemio and Antelo 2000; Chávez Corrales (ed.) 1998.

3. Bourdieu 2001.

4. Bourdieu 2005.

5. Garcia Línara 1999b; 2001b.

Over the last fifteen years, we have seen the disappearance of the *Central Obrera Boliviana* ('Bolivian Workers' Central', COB), which had since 1952 encapsulated the structural characteristics of the proletariat, its subjectivity and its collective ethic. The condition of the working class and the class-identity of the Bolivian proletariat have disappeared, along with the end of large concentrations of workers. As a result, a form of organisation with the capacity to influence the state, which for thirty-five years incorporated other needy sectors from the city and the countryside, has met its end.

Opposing them, a labour-structure has emerged that includes more workers than that of decades ago, but is physically fragmented into tiny shops, both legal and not, with precarious, temporary contracts, systems of promotion based on competition and unions lacking legitimacy in the eyes of the state. A new form of vast social proletarianisation is emerging, therefore, but without organisational roots, deterritorialised,⁶ shot through with a deep lack of inner confidence, with a precarious and short-term mentality, with the nomadism of young workers who have to combine small business, the black market, waged work and agricultural labour, according to the changing seasons and their needs.⁷

Similarly, in the countryside, free trade, new agrarian legislation and municipalisation have drastically transformed the relationship between the state and communal agrarian structure, thus changing patterns of social reproduction, family-trajectories and the hierarchies of colonial domination. Last year's large urban-rural protests were precisely an expression of these processes of reconfiguring of social life and the conditions that make it possible.

As a result of these socio-economic cataclysms, powerful and radical structures of social self-organisation have re-emerged, putting an end to the brief period of neoliberal legitimacy developed over fifteen years with the state-inflicted disruption of old forms of popular aggregation (unions), the moral collapse of the subaltern and a cultural industry of liberal consecration, which incorporated a wide range of disheartened ideologues and intellectuals.

In the following pages, we will briefly consider characteristics of these emerging forms of social self-organisation, comparing them to the old union-form, examining the conditions that make them possible and their historical potential.

6. Zibechi 1999.

7. García Linera 2000d.

The context, structures, strategies and symbolisms of social mobilisation

There are various different theoretical schools in the study of social movements. Some authors have treated the emotional reaction that results from the gap between collective expectations and outcomes as a mobilising force.⁸ Others, in turn, have applied the logic of instrumental reason to the dynamic of collective action, while others have emphasised the importance of 'political opportunity' (the closure of political spaces, the division of élites, the presence of allies, repression, and so on) for participation in social movements.⁹

Other research has addressed the importance of specific international contexts as facilitators of certain collective actions;¹⁰ still others have focused on the distinctive cultural orientations of conflictual actions that produce social movements¹¹ and the possible phases preceding their institutionalisation.¹² Anthony Oberschall proposed an apt interpretation of social movements as 'protest-enterprises', characterised by their capacity for strategic action, the magnitude of the resources they mobilise and their internal and external social networks of articulation.¹³ Other authors have focused on social movements that result in a state crisis and affect the political system. William Gamson¹⁴ has proposed identifying the processes of solidarity building, while Franck Poupeau has analysed the state and anti-state dimensions of collective action, the strategies for breaking down domination, the type of institutionalisation of social action and the role of 'activist capital' as a revitalising force in the study of the implicit and explicit rationality of protest.¹⁵

Strictly speaking, we think that the 'new social-movement' model proposed by Alain Touraine in the 1970s is inadequate for the study of contemporary social movements in Bolivia, as this theory is based on conflicts that question cultural frameworks within social institutions,¹⁶ which is important, but leaves out those conflicts directed against the state, the structures of domination, and the

8. Turner and Killian 1957; Olson 1965; Gurr 1971.

9. Tarrow 1996a; 1996b; Della Porta 1996; Brockett 1991.

10. Oberschall 1993a; 1996.

11. Touraine 1977; 1985; Melucci 1980.

12. Offe 1992.

13. Oberschall 1972; Poupeau 1999.

14. Gamson 1992.

15. Poupeau 1999.

16. Touraine 1977. Fernando Calderón takes up several of Touraine's contributions in his analysis of social movements in Latin America in the 1980s, in Calderón 1985. A similar analysis, which examines the shift of the so-called 'new social movements' in Bolivia from the 'state-centric' sphere to the 'socio-centric' sphere (the women's movement, environmental movement, cultural movement, and so on), is offered by Mayorga 1999. For a critique of the cultural reductionism of these analyses, see Carroll (ed.) 1997.

relations that position the ruling élites in opposition to the masses – precisely those features that characterise current collective actions. In this respect, the contributions made by Oberschall, Sidney Tarrow, Tilly, Jenkins, Poupeau and Eckert are more useful for studying events in Bolivia, as they focus on the movements' effects on the political structure of society, without losing sight of the fact that collective action is much more than a conscious calculation of ends with respect to the means necessary for achieving them, and that links such as solidarity, moral norms of equality and identity – which also constitute an internal rationality for action – are social factors around which people can mobilise.

Using several elements from these authors, let us consider social movements as structures of collective action capable of producing autonomous objectives of mobilisation, association and symbolic economic, cultural and political representation. Analytically, we can distinguish at least the following aspects within social movements: the material conditions that enable a broad though delimited space of possible spheres for social interaction, which, under exceptional circumstances of collective work, are able to generate the emergence of a given social movement; the type and the dynamics of mobilised subjects' cellular and molecular structures of aggregation; mobilisation-practices and resources and, hence, the material dimension of the mobilised *esprit de corps*; the explicit and implicit objectives of social action, expressed in the discourse and the action of the mobilisable social body; the narrative of the collective *self*, or the cultural and symbolic foundation of self-legitimation for the group that is constituted at the time of its mobilisation; the political dimensions (state or anti-state) and the democratic dimensions (reinventing equality and what is public) that are put into play.

1. *The union-form*

The history of the formation of the urban and mining proletarian class-condition in twenty century Bolivia is the history of the union as a mode of building collective identity.

For the workers, mainly those in the mines and factories, the union was the organising network for class-identity and for the accumulation of class-experience, at least over the fifty-year period between 1940 and 1990. In general, the other organisational forms that tried to fulfil this role as the historical synthesis of working-class subjectivity, such as the political parties, were temporary and superficial; they were more a group of external propagandists, who disappeared as soon as repression appeared at the workplace. They were, therefore, not structures that managed to take root in the proletarian habitat, although their cultural influence certainly helped to create a discursive language, and, in part, a collective imaginary. The assimilation of class-experience, however, came

exclusively from the union, as the workers, when it came down to it, had only the union as they grappled with life, repression and death. The union has been the only enduring place for experiencing the vicissitudes of collective existence; it has been the only permanent network for support, friendship and solidarity and the authentic site of workers' self-recognition as a collective body. Everything the workers have done from 1940 to 1990 has been under the union-form: they have engaged in struggle from within the union, they have carried out a revolution (no small feat), they have acquired rights, they have won access to healthcare and housing, they have protected their families, and they have buried their dead. Hence its durability and its importance in the construction of the memory of the working class.

Several previous forms of occupational association began to arise in the late nineteenth century in mining companies, small factories and services, but none of them affected the ways the workers saw themselves and the way they committed themselves to their historical action with as much force as the union did. At first, the mutual-relief funds, mutual associations, study-groups, leagues and federations were organisational experiences that, during the first thirty years of the twentieth century, comprised a growing mass of workers who had chosen the commodification of their productive capacities as their principal means of earning a livelihood. Waged workers, *cajchas*, independent artisans, stallholders and the self-employed, abandoning the *ayllu* or the *hacienda*, founded modes of protection and resistance with languages of tolerance and rebellion that called upon an ingrained agrarian memory. It should not surprise us that, during such periods, organisation was territorial; that is, that it included people from different trades located in the same geographical area. Proletarians, employees, merchants and tailors participated in the same organisation, giving it the strength of local mobilisation, although with the specific interests of waged workers more likely to be diluted among those of the other sectors, given their greater organising experience and more skilled handling of the codes of legitimate language.

The turn to the union-form was not instantaneous. First, unions of various trades arose, in the 1920s, continuing the tradition of territorial association. Later, the railway-, culinary and mining unions emerged, segmenting collective identity along occupational lines. Finally, unions were organised according to workplace. Following the Chaco War, this would become the predominant form of labour-organisation.

It has been said that the rise of trade-unionism was strongly influenced by the presence of workers from other countries, who transmitted their experience to Bolivian workers, and by those Bolivian workers who seasonally moved to northern Chile and Argentina to engage in waged work. It is likely that this was a contributing factor, though not a decisive one, as the organisational composition of the social condition is not a product of discursive events. Rather, it requires

conditions of material possibility that can be triggered or awoken by memory or language.

In particular, we consider that there are four decisive elements in the establishment of the union-form, over and above other forms of labour-organisation:

a) The characteristics of the processes of capital-accumulation and the consumption of labour-power, which started to concentrate enormous volumes of means of production and labour-power in order to carry out 'mass' production.

Certainly, not many companies satisfied these requirements, but those that did started to play a leading role in the construction of the new union-experience; in the workers' self-perception that they 'sustained the country' with the quantity of resources and money that depended upon their labour; and, above all, in the establishment of a working-class culture that combined work, housing, celebrations, family-reunions and children.

These large workplaces (Volcán, Soligno, Forno, Siglo XX-Catavi, Huanuni, Colquiri, Caracoles, Manaco, and so on), given their structural characteristics concentrating enormous amounts of technological investment and variable capital, took control of an organisational productive force – namely, the force of the masses – that allowed labour-productivity to rise at no extra cost with respect to traditional and handicraft-forms of production. But, at the same time, this helped to create another, associative productive force out of labour – the force of the working masses – as a result of the concentration of enormous groups of workers with the same working conditions in small geographic centres. The size of these groups made them a social fact of mobilisable force. Furthermore, the enormous investments and concentrations of labour in mining and manufacturing, to the extent that they became responsible for the greatest indices of production and the greatest creation of economic surplus, complemented this self-perception of being a working-class collective force whose economic importance was structurally guaranteed. With this internalised as collective experience, it became the economic focus of the working class, so characteristic of the union-movement's proletarian subjectivity. In this case, the minor but determinant real subsumption of labour-processes to capital¹⁷ was actually the only expression of modernity in the country, as well as what created the conditions for the characteristics of the organised labour-movement.

b) The consolidation of a type of worker with a regular, open-ended contract, essential for learning new and complex work-processes and for keeping them in continuous operation. The main manufacturing and mining workplaces did not replace the skilled artisans, the individual bearers of technical skills, but rather incorporated them into a system of permanent industrial labour, as what have been termed industrial artisan-labourers. The contractual form that enabled

17. Marx 1976.

the retention of this skilled workforce – essential for putting the investment in machinery into action, but nomadic in its artisanal and agrarian habits – was the open-ended contract, so characteristic of the Bolivian proletariat in general and especially since the 1940s, being made into law in the 1950s. This type of contract ensured the retention of skilled workers, their knowledge, their occupational continuity and their affiliation with the company for long periods. Indeed, this was a necessity for the companies, allowing the effective implementation of technological and organisational changes in the capitalist investment of large companies, which required the uninterrupted presence of disciplined workers well-suited to the demands of the machinery. But in addition, to the extent that this material condition was internalised as workers' collective experience, it allowed the creation of a social representation of homogenous time and cumulative practices that culminated in a worker's life-cycle ending with retirement and the support of new generations.

The open-ended contract allowed the future of the individual to be seen as part of a long-lasting collective evolution, and, therefore, it allowed workers to commit to this future and to this collective, because their achievements could be appropriated over time. We are speaking of the construction of a *class-time* characterised by predictability, a sense of assured destiny and geographical roots that allowed long-term commitments and virtuous risk-taking in pursuit of an attainable future – a future that was worth fighting for, since it existed and was tangible.

Nobody struggles without at least a little confidence that they can win, nor do they fight without at least a little conviction that they will be able to take advantage of the rewards over time. The skilled worker's open-ended contract positively established the belief in a future worth fighting for, because, after all, a future can only be fought for when it is certain that there is a future.

Thus, this modern skilled worker appears in history as a condensed subject, bearer of a specific social temporality and a long-lasting *narrative* power that form the basis of the mining proletariat's most important class-affirming actions over the last century. The historic virtue of these workers lies, precisely, in their ability to have used these conditions of material and symbolic possibility for their own ends.

c) The existence of a system of internal loyalties, which allowed association by workplace to become a value that could be accumulated. This system emerged with the implementation of a procedure of promotions and advancement within the company based on seniority, practical apprenticeship with the master-tradesman, and industrial labour-discipline, legitimised by access to monetary, cognitive and symbolic rewards, hierarchically distributed among segments of the workforce.

The great corporatist spirit of Bolivian unionism was born from the cohesion and leadership of a core consisting of the master-tradesman, whose position reproduced a chain of commands and worker-loyalties centred around him, by means of the accumulation of experiences over time and practical apprenticeships, which were then transmitted to newcomers by means of a rigid structure of worker-discipline whose rewards included the 'secret' of the trade and compensation based on seniority. This mindset in the workplace meant that workers could combine a double social narrative. In the first place, they had a narrative of historical time, going from the past to the future. This was possible because the future was foreseeable as a result of the fixed contract, continuity in the company, and life in the work-camp or town. In the second place, they had a narrative of class-continuity, in which apprentices saw their futures as masters of the trade, and the 'old ones', who occupied the highest ranks, would, little-by-little, share their 'secrets' with the younger ones, who would do the same with subsequent newcomers, in a chain of cultural and symbolic inheritances that assured the accumulation of a class-experience of unions.

The need to anchor this 'human capital' in the company – since a large part of the mechanical productivity measures depended on it, and since it embodied the knowledge indispensable to production – pushed employers to consolidate the definitive bind of the worker to waged labour by institutionalising seniority-based promotions.

This, undoubtedly, demanded the breakdown of the workers' strong ties to the agrarian world, achieved by expanding the market-spaces for the reproduction of the workforce and by changing dietary customs, lifestyles and work-ethics, in what could be considered to be a violent process of sedentarising the working class and the progressive eradication of behavioural structures and understandings of social time tied to the rhythms of agricultural work. Today, we know that these transformations were never fully completed; they even continue now, as companies struggle to deny workers time for festivities and *pijcheo*. Rather, these transformations gave way to the birth of hybrid mental structures, combining assembly-forms of deliberation and agrarian rationalities, such as the symbolic interaction with ritualised nature at parties, *wajitas* and *pijcheos*, with behaviours specific to industrial rationality, such as workplace-association, labour-discipline, the patriarchal family-unit and the commodification of the conditions of social reproduction.

The sedentarisation of workers, as an objective condition of large-scale capitalist production, thus resulted in the mining camps no longer being merely temporary dormitories for an itinerant workforce, as they had been until then.

Indeed, it allowed them to become centres for the long-term construction of working-class culture, where the collective memory of class was accumulated.

The so-called 'accumulation in the heart of the class'¹⁸ is a collective mental structure, embedded as general culture, which can be accumulated and extended. The possibility of what we have termed an *internal class narrative* and the presence of a physical space for the *continuity and sedimentation* of collective experience were conditions of symbolic and physical possibility that, with time, allowed for the constitution of these transcendent forms of workers' collective political identity. These forms were the basis for the construction of long-lasting periods of political identity for the mining proletariat, including the 1952 Revolution, resistance to military dictatorships and the restorations of parliamentary democracy.

d) A fusion of the citizens' rights and labour-rights that, beginning in the 1940s, resulted from the state-recognition of the legitimacy of union-organising. At first, with the exception of the mutual-aid societies promoted by management, workers' organisations were systematically ignored by business-owners and state-personnel. Only the pressure, the persistence and the strength of the masses forced business-owners and governmental officials to recognise the federations and unions as valid interlocutors. However, beginning in the late 1930s, the state itself began to take the initiative of promoting union-organising, officially validating it and encouraging it as a mechanism for tripartite negotiations, along with management. As early as 1936, the government decreed that joining a union was mandatory; later, other governments promoted the formation of national union-organisations such as the *Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Bolivia* ('Union Confederation of Workers of Bolivia', CSTB) in 1939, the *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia* ('Union Federation of Mineworkers of Bolivia', FSTMB) in 1944, the *Confederación General de Trabajadores Fabriles de Bolivia* ('General Confederation of Manufacturing Workers of Bolivia', CGTFB) in 1950, and so on. Unionism emerged onto the stage as an autonomous creation, but also as an initiative tolerated, and later supported, by the state itself. This double nature of the union, riddled with permanent tensions, contradictions and ruptures that tilt the scale toward workers' autonomy, in some cases, and toward their incorporation into the state, in others, marked their behaviour during the following decades.

All things considered, since then, and until 1985, the union was the legitimate form for gaining access to public rights, and the nation, state hegemony and its homogenising principles spread, through the unions, to the great tumult of agrarian migrants heading to the cities and the factories. That the union took on

18. Zavaleta 1985.

the form of legitimate citizenship meant that, from that point forward, the union became the place for the granting, direction and realisation of civil rights – the rights with which society seeks to envisage itself as a politically satisfied community. The union itself also became the organising network for the development and accumulation of its own political capital.¹⁹

From then on, to be a citizen meant to be a member of a union. Whether in the country, the mine, the factory, the shop or through artisan-activity, the way to gain a tangible identity in the eyes of others and to be recognised as a valid interlocutor by governmental authorities was through the union. It was the reservoir of acceptable social individuality, and the union emerged as the tacit interlocutor between civil society and the state, but with the virtue that it was a citizenship that permanently demanded its validation in the streets, in the tumultuous actions of the masses, which have been, all things considered, and ever since the April 1952 rebellion, the language of validating citizenship in and by the state.

It was upon this structural base that the workers produced this unique form of historical presence called the 'labour-movement'. Ultimately, it is a form of self-aggregation for the purpose of practical mobilisation; a cultural structure of collective affiliation, of the sedimentation of shared experiences; a sense of history that is imagined to be shared; institutional routines that verify the existence of the collective; and symbols that daily affirm the *esprit de corps*.

The historical development of this form of collective existence was a social *process* that, through revolutions, persecutions, conventions, martyrs and documents, held the workplace as its point of departure and of inevitable arrival. This is the source of the first basic characteristic of this form of social mobilisation. To the extent that the labour-union involves a type of waged worker at a company with more than twenty workers (a legal requirement) and with an open-ended contract (by custom), the union-form is based on the company as its organisational unit. The union is, then, a unit, and ultimately, a working-class identity structured around the workplace. Of course, as the visible and public presence of the worker is taken on by the company-union, discarding other organisational forms (such as neighbourhood, sporting and cultural organisations, and so on), the union becomes the reference-point for the identity of the working-class condition, not only giving rise to a narrative that unites its members, but also becoming a centre of attraction and a prospect for other non-unionised social groups.

This internally marked the dynamic of the labour-movement's organisational base. Its strength, its spread and its durability are directly proportional to the consistency, breadth and diversification of the production-plants subjected to

19. Beaud and Pialoux 1999.

the modalities of real subsumption, open-ended contracts and vertical accumulation. Thus the development of the labour-movement can be traced to one phase of capitalist expansion and one model of capital regulation and accumulation. It is, therefore, not unusual that the decline of this particular form of working-class identity should be accompanied by a techno-organisational modification in the forms of business-management and regulation, which are eradicating the large company, the open-ended contract and promotion by seniority, massively enlarging the segment of the workforce that this same *union-form* did not consider in its policies regarding association and affiliation.

The second characteristic of this *form* of the working classes' social existence also derives from this structural cornerstone: the development of a unifying discourse and a central vision of action based on the legal struggle for the moral-historical value of the workforce. Since the company is the articulating node of social affiliation, the basic factor that identifies everyone as members of a company is the sale of their capacity to work – the wage. It is clear that this fundamentally influences the motives for aggregation and the norms for raising demands with which the group makes itself publicly visible. However, this does not necessarily limit the extent of collective social action to a political economy of wages. The fact that wage-related struggles are at the centre of the mobilising demands, or at least one amongst others, and the fact that the wage is treated like an economy of haggling between corporately-represented private owners (the association between business-groups and unions), or as a practice of the self-valorisation of labour – that is, of reappropriating the shared product of social labour – depends on the particular ways in which the wage-relation is historically dealt with and signified by the workers.

In the case of workers' trade-unionism, it is clear that the wage was never perceived as the only uniting and mobilising factor; over time, it has always been accompanied by the pursuit of more complex forms of labour-power's social value (for example, social rights), of political demands (co-government, union-privileges, political democracy, and so on), and management of the public good (such as nationalisation of big mining, modification of governmental policies). However, it is also true that the wage and a political economy of the value of labour-power have played a central role in the construction of the working-class identity, its institutionalisation and its form of addressing the dominant powers. Seeing the wage as the result of bargaining between market-actors has generally prevailed over seeing the wage as a reappropriation of the creative capacity for work (self-valorisation), and hence the labour-movement has only weakly challenged the networks of intra-business power, the forms of managing production and the use of technology in production.

Still, this cohesion of strength along company-lines slowly established the third characteristic of this form of social mobilisation: a solid organisational structure that, sustained by the consistency of workplace-identity, extended throughout the national territory in an extensive and dense network of hierarchical commands within each trade, between multiple trades, along departmental lines and, ultimately, at the national level.

The *Central Obrera Boliviana* ('Bolivian Workers' Central', COB), fruit of the power conferred by workers uniting together, has been the only structure created by workers on a truly national scale, with the additional virtue of having a system of well-institutionalised organisational practices and material structures (buildings, documentation, membership-fees).

They boasted workplace-assemblies, leaderships for particular companies, trade-meetings, departmental meetings, extended national meetings, trade- and departmental leaderships, and, in the national sphere, they were the institutional expression of a system of participation and deliberation that was able to encompass the greater part of the Bolivian proletariat, and whose materiality and weight in social experience, despite its systematic dismantling by the dominant élites, continue to have a notable weight on the organisational practices of the subaltern classes' new experiences of social organisation.

This organisational network, these technologies for the controlled delegation of authority and these material means for collective existence ingrained a long-term sense of belonging and participation that not only enabled the consolidation of an organisational culture rooted in the everyday characteristics of the workers' occupational activity, but also enabled the continuity of a class's social trajectory over time that successfully overcame military persecutions, company-layoffs, massacres and sanctions, with which the state punished the strength of working-class autonomy. At the same time, this organisational structure worked like a system of commands and hierarchies, centralised first at the scale of the occupational sector (federations and confederations) and then at the national level (the COB), effectively mobilising its members.

The fourth characteristic is a mobilisable and disciplined mass force structured around the hierarchical leadership in the workplace, the trade and the national organisation. Not all departmental or national organisational and participatory structures are immediately mobilisable mass forces. This requires a particular way of accumulating experiences, which, in the case of the labour-movement, takes on the strength of a virtuous doctrine in class-formation.

There are many reasons for such a solid form of the self-representation of the subaltern classes. Discovering that joint and disciplined action extends the limits of possibility for their demands is a common experience for all waged workers

facing competition in the job-market, which constantly devalues the historical-moral extent of their labour-power commodity. But for class-unity to exist as a mass prejudice institutionalised in a single national organisation, and, what is more, for it to take the union-form, requires unique ways of dealing with the rules of the labour-market and the process of self-valorisation.

For class-unity, and later popular unity, to be institutionalised in a single national union-structure, with practices of hierarchically structured internal discipline, not only was a successful fusion of the working-class and the popular sphere necessary, as occurred in the April 1952 uprising, but it was also critical that the organisational experience of this founding event of the 'popular' take place as a form of union-discipline, which was exactly the form by which the militarised working-class and plebeian structures that defeated the oligarchic army in three days combined. This was, then, a milestone in the activity of the masses, securing social triumph by means of joint mobilisation organised around the union and a structure of clearly defined commands and loyalties with respect to state-institutionality. The culture of presenting a list of demands that brings together the sectorial demands of several workplaces, and then several social sectors, in a single document, meant the annual affirmation of a collective memory of the interweaving of demands and actions as a form of reconstructing the unity of the masses.

Thus, the subsequent development of the unitary union and its practices of hierarchical union-discipline as a form of class-identity were not merely a commemoration of this initiating event. To a large extent, they were also the recreation of this form of working-class organisation – no longer triumphant, but rather suffering and dramatic – in order to tolerate, resist or obstruct the advance of the dictatorships, the layoffs and massacres, as well as the creation of renewed flows of recognition between the rank-and-file and the leaders.

Discipline thus became an experience coloured with the best class-conquests (the revolution) and the defence of the class-position (resistance to the dictatorships). It was, therefore, a behaviour that was rewarded historically with successfully securing citizenship for the class. As a result, this enabled a certainty of mobilisation; namely, a minimum number of mobilisable members that would back a demand, which, in the terrain of negotiation, provides a powerful force for breaking down the adversary.

The fact that the collective development has paid dividends to a system of command does not mean that this system can be exercised with impunity. In order to last, a series of internal organisational practices are necessary that constitute the fifth characteristic of this *form* of historical action. One of these practices is the assembly-style and deliberative democracy that is exercised in each of the hierarchical structures in the union-system.

In the company-assembly, as well as the trade-assembly and the departmental and national assembly, workers have been able to create a form of radical democracy as the substance of the articulation of their unity, effectively combining a moral sense of personal responsibility for the common good, a system for the control of representatives (leaders) by the represented (union-grassroots), regular mechanisms of accountability to collective voters (assemblies), and the civic virtue of widespread intervention by union-members in the formation of public opinion and the development of a vision for action. This does not deny the presence of collective practices that tend to hinder broad democratic practice, such as the limits placed on dissent once resolutions have been deliberated and decided upon by the majority, the use of subtle means of internal coercion, and so on. Nonetheless, neither does this overshadow the mass of democratic practices incorporated as historical assets into the construction of the working class.

The sense of individual responsibility has emerged around the belief, and then the notable custom, of seeking personal improvements by securing improvements for the rest of the members, be they from the same work-team, the same workplace, the same trade or all unionised workers. Of course, this was favoured by the technological characteristics of the labour-process, which required forms of group-loyalty for the transmission of knowledge, but the fact that this technological possibility has become a class-prejudice was, above all, a creation of the very identity of the working class.

The deliberative culture within assembly-style democracy came not only from the actual convergence of equals (the great contemporary deficit of liberal democracy) in their capacity as bearers of labour-power, which assured all workers of the validity of their opinions to the collective, but also from representatives' dependency on the temperament and decision of the represented, requiring that the decisions they made be the product of a discursive consensus among the union's grassroots and not the whim of the leaders. But also, given that a good part of the leaders' expenses and activities are dependent upon the contributions of the grassroots, there is a material link between the leaders and the grassroots that even further limits the possibility of the former making autonomous decisions without the input of the latter. In this sense, it is common to see sessions at workers' assemblies critically evaluating the actions of their leaders. The leaders provide the collective with an account of their actions, with the possibility of being condemned or recalled, and the next steps for the union-movement are worked out, with an interminable list of speakers, enabling consensus viewpoints to be publicly presented as coming from the collective.

It is the exercise of these democratic practices that has sustained an efficient apparatus of autonomous social mobilisation, articulated from within the workplace, and, to a certain extent, the practical existence (rather than a mental

construct) of a different way of managing public affairs and a different kind of political sovereignty.

And this is the sixth component of the *union-form*. Just as it was being constituted, the labour-movement's strategy of political action was deeply influenced by its horizon regarding the state, not in the sense of having ambitions of state-power, but of its subordination to the norms and the interpretation issued from the nationalist state. The practices of political sovereignty that were structured around the union were generally limited to the sphere of strategies and the intensity of the claims made on the state, and not so much the perspective of questioning or radically repudiating demand-making, which would have implied workers taking on the role of sovereign and arbiter. This means that the workers cultivated an entrenched, militant spirit of making demands on the state, but framed by the contexts of signification and modernisation promoted by the nationalist state.

Thus arose a model of negotiated mobilisation integrated with state-rationality, which, other than during specific extreme moments of possible risk of death, did not dare to see itself as sovereign, preferring to entrench itself in the position of the claimant, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the state, which can only claim a monopoly on legitimate physical and symbolic violence²⁰ if there are social subjects that allow, or tolerate and reinforce, this expropriation of public prerogatives.

Now, of course, this repeated delegation of the right to govern to the élite, which has always claimed for itself the right to govern, was not only the result of a pre-reflexive internalisation of the practices of the governed. It was also the result of a system of social rewards that the union was able to reap by institutionalising and moderating its mobilising activities. The social benefits, union-citizenship, pay-bonuses, the union's material assets and the set of social rights in general that it secured after the 1952 Revolution, as its structural underpinning, produced an economy of citizens' demands (union-citizenship and social rights) and political concessions (legitimacy of the nationalist state and assimilation into its symbolic structures) that characterised the temperament of union-forms of mobilisation.

The labour-movement, and the union-form under which it existed, were, therefore, a close synthesis of three economies, constituting the backbone of this form of mobilisation and historical identity: a) a market-economy of labour-power's historical moral value; b) a moral economy of subservience and resistance; and c) a political and symbolic economy of autonomy and future action.

Based on the fusion of these three internal components of the working class's existence, the union-form was periodically able to create a space of social expan-

20. Bourdieu 1996.

sion or a composite bloc of social classes. The COB, which is the name of this historical process, at the same time as allowing institutionalisation and founding of the narrative outline of the working class, contributed to other subaltern classes being able to obtain a public existence and real historical sedimentation. The COB was a thread in the self-construction of social classes, but in terms of the symbols, codes and organisational parameters of the labour-movement. Union-membership erased or displaced other forms of self-organisation of the subaltern; its deliberative practices were partially imitated by other elements, while the workplace-based discourse and working-class discipline were assimilated as collective assets by a large spectrum of social fractions and classes, adapting them, of course, to their own ends and skills.

The *mass form*, which, according to René Zavaleta, was the form adopted by the active presence of working-class centrality and its spread,²¹ not only revealed itself during the COB's most intense mobilisations (1970–1, 1978–81, 1982–5), but also in the mobilisations of just a few unions or of the COB as the organising, unifying and representative centre of the insurgency of many de-unionised sectors or of those with other, not specifically corporatist loyalties. This was the case with the indigenous-urban population around the mining unions in 1981, and with the civil population of La Paz in 1979 following the COB's call for an indefinite strike.

Each one of these cases of blocs of social classes coalescing are historical singularities, exceptional events that spatially and geographically organise the working class around the union, the waged popular sector around the working class, and the plebeian world around the union, breaking the configuration of state-forces and creating a point of inflection in the structure of governmental legitimacy. Hence the eminently political import of this type of social articulation, which has produced major changes in national political life; in some cases, processes of social democratisation (1978–82) and, in others, conservative regression (1971, 1985), depending on the density and the continuity of the proposals of this 'composite historical bloc' (as Zavaleta describes it).

2. *The multitude-form*

Over the last thirteen years, the entire foundation that made the unions and the COB the nucleus of urban subaltern identities has been systematically dismantled. This is not because there are no longer workers, or because there are no more radical leaders, or because the Berlin Wall has fallen. In reality, social history is based on facts more powerful than prejudices.

21. Zavaleta 1985. See also the study of the differences Zavaleta proposes between the 'mass form' and the 'multitude-form' in Tapia 2002b.

A new model of business-development

In technical and productive terms, Bolivia continues to be, like decades ago, a geographic space where productive, technological, and occupational rationalities and forms of association from different historical periods and civilisations (capitalist, communal, *campesino*, artisanal, and so on) overlap. Similarly, just like centuries ago, it continues to be predominantly a commodity-exporting country (for instance, natural gas, oil, minerals, and soy-beans). However, the means by which the partial or flawed combination of these modern and traditional productive structures takes place has varied considerably.

Until the 1980s, in line with the Fordist development-model then predominant at the global level, but in their own hybrid and belated fashion, the dominant élites in Bolivia pursued processes of import-substitution and of broadening the internal market of consumers and producers, converting self-sufficient *campesinos* into property-owners and waged workers, diversifying the productive base of the economy through state-intervention in the creation of companies, wage-management based on social rights, and so on. Looming on the horizon for business-groups, government-leaders, opposition-figures, intellectuals and foreign financiers was a slow breakdown of the traditional structures of production. These structures were considered to be temporary imperfections that would have to give way to the 'modernity' of waged labour, large-scale industry, large concentrations of blue-collar workers, the market for products and land, widespread commerce and a cultural and consumer-homogeneity regulated by a socially protective and business-friendly state.

Such a model no longer works. Though the state still intervenes significantly in the regulation of the price of labour-power, investment-security, the price of money and public savings, it has been stripped of its functions of ownership and entrepreneurship, such that it no longer takes responsibility for creating economic surpluses or for controlling the most important productive branches of the domestic capitalist economy. The economic areas of greatest capital-investment, of greatest surplus-creation and of the greatest integration with the global market are now in the hands of transnational capital, which has become the principal agent of driving the modern economy forward.²²

The so-called 'national bourgeoisie', both the state-bourgeoisie version and that of the bourgeoisie based in the domestic market, is a subaltern business-sector, limited to small artisanal and commercial activities. Meanwhile, the exporting bourgeoisies (mining, agribusiness), along with the banking bourgeoisie, have hitched their fortunes to large-scale foreign investment as its junior

22. UDAPE 2000.

and technologically subservient partners. Foreign investment has not opened up any new areas of economic activity, but has, instead, intensively colonised those areas already created with the intervention of the state: oil, gas, telecommunications, electricity, air-transport, railways and banking.

What is actually new about this remodelling of the Bolivian economy is not just the change in régimes of property-ownership or the concentration of capital; the form of the technological concentration of this investment is also new.

The Fordist model, or its Latin-American 'import-substitution' version, consisted of a type of extensive accumulation based on the creation of large factories that gathered together different occupational functions and joined enormous contingents of workers in compact territorial spaces. Today, in contrast, foreign and domestic investment pursue a disintegrated model of technological investment and work. Production-processes in general, such as those of mining, oil and manufacturing, have been fragmented into small centres of intensive capital-investment employing few waged workers. Commerce and banking have also seen a decentralisation of tasks.

Thus, an economic model of technological and demographic atomisation is emerging in small workplaces horizontally organised in a network of modern market-sectors, but it is also – and this is the third novel component of the current economic structure – vertically combined in various ways with areas of the traditional artisan, family-based and *campesino* economy: the buying and selling of precarious, temporary labour-power to meet short-term business-needs; the buying and selling of labour-power in the form of semi-finished products, which are then integrated into industrial or business-processes; the consumption of industrial products as a part of the reproduction of the communal *campesino* economy and urban domestic-artisan economic units; access to commodity-money through credit and savings; and finally, the confiscation and expropriation by business of the conditions essential for the reproduction of society (water, land, basic services). The particularity of these new ties of domination between these two levels in the dualised social structure of Bolivian society is key to understanding the current forms of the contemporary reconstitution of the plebeian social fabric.

Unlike what occurred in the mid-twentieth century, when the ideal of modernisation implied the gradual erosion of the traditional systems of the *campesino*, artisanal and communal economy, today banking, industry, large-scale trade, large-scale private mining and export-agribusiness – each in their own way – have given new functions to occupational, associative and cultural systems in the *campesino*, artisan and domestic economy. In doing so, they have been able to secure raw materials (milk, wool, soy-beans, wheat, rice, minerals, coca) and components for manufacturing parts of products (gold jewellery,

shoes, textiles, cocaine-paste); to create a supply of temporary labour and to depress urban wages (oil, manufacturing); and to charge higher-than-average interest-rates (banking).

To the extent that the capitalist development-project implemented with liberal reforms has reinforced an economic structure with small nodes of technological and organisational modernisation, vertically integrating a wide range of traditional, *campesino* and family-based activities, technologies, knowledge and economic organisational networks, it has created a hybrid and fractalising régime of accumulation based on the limited 'modernisation' of transnationalised economic enclaves (mining, banking, oil, telecommunications, cocaine), overlapping and partially combined with forms of exaction, domination and exploitation of non-modern, agro-communal, small *campesino*, artisanal, microenterprise- and home-based economic structures, and so forth. The contemporary development-model is thus a flawed integration of the majority-spaces of formal subsumption around the small, albeit dense and dominant, spaces of the real subsumption²³ of structures of labour, circulation and consumption to capital.

The reconfiguration of social classes, modes of political domination and resistance

Transformations in the techno-organisational processes of the economy have been accompanied by changes in the technical and political composition of the popular classes. In particular, the most affected has been the working class.

The number of waged workers and people that have to commodify some type of productive capacity in order to reproduce their labour-power is twice what it was fifteen years ago, when unionism was the axis around which the country revolved. And the material and symbolic conditions upon which the *union-form* and the trajectory of the old labour-movement were erected no longer exist.

The large companies and workers' strongholds that forged a culture of corporatist aggregation have been replaced by numerous small and medium-sized factories capable of extending industrial labour into the home, producing an overwhelming social disintegration and material fragmentation of the mass workforce.²⁴ The permanent contract, which upheld a sense of predictability, is now an exception as compared to subcontracting, short-term work and piece-work, which have made collective identity precarious and promote workers' nomadism, limiting their capacity to forge long-term loyalties.²⁵ This weakened

23. Marx 1976.

24. Rossell and Rojas 2000.

25. Arze 1999; 2001.

collective identity gives rise to a 'hybridisation' (to use Bakhtin's term) of the class-condition and to the emergence of 'contingent identities'²⁶ of workers according to their activities, trades, the cultural settings in which they are temporarily located, and the dynamic of 'blurred boundaries' between the space of work and that of non-work.²⁷ The transmission of knowledge through stable job stratification and promotion by seniority is being replaced by multifunctionality, the rotation of staff, and merit- and competition-based promotions. This has the effect of destroying the function of the union as a mechanism for mobility and social stability²⁸ as well as destroying the structure of disciplined commands so characteristic of the old union-form of mobilisation.

Lastly, the union has been banished as a legitimate form of mediation between state and society, and slowly replaced by the party-system, further eroding the representational effectiveness it once had as political mediator and bearer of citizenship.²⁹ In its place – arbitrarily and without stability – a party-system has been erected that has led to the bifurcation of political life, between an élite that perpetuates itself in its exclusive control of the management of the public good, and the great mass of voters, clientelised and lacking any real capacity to intervene in the management of the public good.

In this context, symbolic precariousness, a consequence of institutionalised precariousness, emerges as a social temperament that strengthens a shared sense of long-term unpredictability, a lack of collective narrative, an exacerbated individualism and a fatalism in the face of destiny that erodes, for now, the 'sense of sharing a common destiny',³⁰ such as that which the old Bolivian labour-movement succeeded in articulating.

The certainty that collective struggle is necessary in order to improve the situation of the individual is slowly giving way to a new principle of the times. This widely held, though not absolute, principle contends that it is better to individually adapt oneself to the demands of employers and the government in order to achieve advantage. Thus, the long chain of objective mechanisms of subservience and intimidation is set in motion, internalising within the waged worker's subjectivity a (temporary) reluctance to change one's situation by means of collective action, in solidarity. Thus emerges a new and complex material quality of the identity and subjectivity of the contemporary worker.

This has spelt the death of the COB – that is, the death of the meaning, of the conditions and of the projections of the workers' collective action that prevailed

26. Bhabha 1994; Werbner and Modood (eds.) 1997.

27. Beck 2000.

28. García Linera 2001b.

29. Chávez 2000.

30. Beaud and Pialoux 1999.

for forty years – but it is also the death of the inclusion of the union within the composition of the state. It is the death, then, not of trade-unionism, but of a particular material and symbolic meaning of trade-unionism, which no longer exists and will never exist again. It is also the death of a *form* of the working-class condition and of the labour-movement, though not of the Labour-Movement, which, in the years to come, could adopt other historical *forms*. The old complex of its forms, modalities and characteristics no longer exists, and to evoke it or desire it today is a tribute to the naïve idealism that believes that it is enough to declare ideas for them to become reality.

Over the last decade, we have witnessed the breakdown of the only lasting structure of nationwide unity produced by the working classes that was able to bear influence on the state, beginning a long period of atomising the demands and collectivity of the dominated sectors of Bolivian society. But, at the same time, we have witnessed a slow and multiform reconstitution of working-class identities, based on, and above and beyond, this fragmentation. The decade to come could give rise to new historical forms of the labour-movement and of working-class organising.

But the breakdown in the conditions of possibility for the union-form have also, in part, constituted the conditions of possibility for the emergence of other forms of social combination and collective action. Certainly, the fragmentation of labour-processes, the extinction of the skilled workers, with their chain of command and corporatist loyalties, and the removal of the union from the role of political mediator have demolished the form of nationwide unity based on the workplace and state-legitimacy. But, since they have not been replaced by other structures of social affiliation, lasting collective identity or other mechanisms of political mediation established by the state, the last decade has seen a return to, or a social strengthening of, traditional and territorial forms of local organisation.³¹

The multitude

We will not linger, here, on the particular circumstances that enabled the emergence of the *multitude-form* during the days of social mobilisation from January

31. The concept of *multitude-form* we propose, here, differs from that proposed by Zavaleta. In general, he developed this concept in relation to the behaviour of the proletariat as a spontaneous subject, as ‘masses in action and not as a class’. On this, see Zavaleta 1983; 1985. In contrast, we treat the multitude as a bloc of collective action that articulates the autonomous organised structures of the subaltern classes around discursive and symbolic constructions of hegemony, which are unique in that their origin varies among different segments of the subaltern classes.

to September 2000; detailed analyses of these already exist.³² What we will attempt is a more structural analysis of this form of collective action, one that occurs repeatedly in Bolivian social history, though with different characteristics in each context.

a) *The mode of territorial and flexible unification*

To the extent that a large part of workplace-collectivities have been attacked by policies of labour-flexibilisation, liberalised contracts and fragmentation of the production-process, pre-existing forms of territorial organisation – such as neighbourhood councils, territorially-based unions (of *campesinos* and workers) and skilled-trade associations – have taken on primary importance. As shop-floor unionism – which had previously overshadowed these other forms – weakened, it opened the way for these other unifying structures to play a greater role. It was thought that, following the dismantling of structures of nationwide unity like the COB, there would be a long process of social disorganisation, susceptible to discipline and capture by clientelist institutions such as political parties, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Church. However, the collapse of the older structures of nationwide mobilisation able to bear influence on the state has led to a multifaceted, complex and widespread organisational fabric in subaltern society, rooted in local spheres of interest.

One of the axes of the neoliberal strategy for reconfiguring the generation of economic surplus is that of the subsumption of use-values to the logic of exchange-value, or, to put it another way, the commodification of the conditions for basic social reproduction (water, land, services), which used to be regulated by a logic of (local or state) public access. The social wealth directly involved in this expropriation is precisely that which possesses a territorial function, such as land and water, thus creating the material conditions for the practical reactivation of new structures of combination, emerging from the new dangers faced. This is the case of the *Asociaciones de Regantes* ('Associations of Irrigation-Farmers'), which, based in many cases upon traditional organisational knowledge and skills practiced over centuries³³ but adapted to current needs, have created modern means of coming together and affiliation in order to defend the management of water according to traditional 'practices and customs'.

In general, these core-groups have had an active role only in local terms, either because of their brief existence or because their influence has been limited by increasing state-proscriptions against the corporatist political logic that has guided the relationship between state and society since the 1940s. However,

32. Tapia, Gutiérrez, Prada and García Linera 2000, *El retorno de la Bolivia plebeya*. La Paz: Comuna, 2000; Kruse and Vargas 2000.

33. Fernández 1996; Gerbrandy and Hoogendam 1998; Hoogendam 1999.

the persistence, the breadth, the very collective and individualised legacy of collective action, and, indeed, the widespread nature of the aggression suffered in different local settings, have helped make it possible for these nodes to create an extensive network of mobilisation and collective action, first at the regional level, then provincially and, finally, at the departmental level.

The *Coordinadora del Agua y de la Vida* ('Coalition for Water and Life'), the name temporarily adopted by one of the manifestations of the *multitude-form* in one region, is, first of all, a network of communicative action – in a sense similar to that proposed by Habermas.³⁴ It is horizontal, in that it is the outcome of the practical formation of a social space for the encounter among 'equals' – namely, those affected by the water-issue, who have equal rights to express opinions, intervene and act. With complex and diverse internal communicational flows, participants in the *Coordinadora* are creating a cohesive discourse and a set of demands, goals and commitments in order to achieve their objectives in a joint fashion. Second, the *Coordinadora* is a network of practical action with a capacity to mobilise independently of the state, the Church, the political parties and the NGOs.

What is essential about this multitude is that – unlike the crowd, in which individuals come together without any membership or dependency other than the euphoria of immediate action – this is predominantly a gathering of collective individuals; that is, an association of associations, in which all the people that are present in the public act of meeting together do not speak for themselves, but rather for a local collective entity to which they must account for their actions, their decisions and their words.

It is very important to bear this in mind, because unlike what Habermas believes, the power to intervene in public spaces is never equitably distributed; there are people and institutions with greater discursive experience, with greater organisational skills (Poupeau's so-called 'militant capital') that enable them to exert influence in an assembly, a *cabildo* or a meeting and to sway decisions in favour of one position and to silence others. This can be seen, for example, in the raucous interventions and prearranged alliances in the assembly employed by some advocates of the political structures of the old Left. However, these simplistic, pseudo-radical interventions by 'discourse-professionals', who do not answer to anyone for their actions, find their influence obstructed by the responsibility of each assembly-participant for their words, their decisions and their commitments to their districts, to those that sent them from their neighbourhoods, committees and communities. It is they who, ultimately, accept or reject the resolutions adopted in the assemblies. And these associations, in whose name

34. Habermas 1987.

the individuals act, are, above all, territorial organisations with a significant part of the communicational infrastructure (radio-stations and newspapers with local audiences, meeting spaces, blockade areas, and so on) and, above all, the force and breadth of mobilisation. The multitude is not a jumble of unorganised individuals, but rather, on the contrary, it is an organised action by people previously organised, like COB was in its time, only now it has territorial structures as its meeting centres.

Moreover, these territorial organisations are the backbone that sustains the public action, mobilisations and social pressure of the multitude. One of their virtues with respect to the *union-form* is that they do not create a division between members and non-members in the way that the union used to. In their local and departmental meetings, in mass actions, in the assemblies and *cabildos*, and in the mobilisations, blockades and confrontations, other people, lacking a group-affiliation (individuals) or representing other organisational forms (labour-unions, *ayllus*), can also intervene, express opinions and participate, significantly extending the social base of action and legitimacy.

In this sense, the *multitude* is a fairly flexible organisational network. It is loose enough that, with a sufficiently solid and permanent organising core, it is, like the COB once was, able to convoke, lead and 'sweep along' other organisational forms and a great number of citizens 'at large', who as a result of their occupational precariousness and the processes of modernisation and individualisation, lack traditional loyalties. It is also a mobilising structure capable of integrating the internal dynamic of deliberation, resolution and action and to incorporate individuals and associations into its own networks for the purpose of seeking both immediate and long-term aims.

b) *Type of demands and organisational base*

The principal demands around which these local associative centres have begun to combine have been those of water-management, access to land and the cost of basic services. Together, these demands mark out the space of essential and primary forms of wealth that materially sustain social reproduction.

The rural workers' defence of their management of water and land, and of the culture of complex social networks tied to this management, faces attempts to replace the concrete meaning of wealth (the satisfaction of needs) and its forms of direct regulation (familial-community membership) with an abstract meaning of wealth (business-profits) and other forms of regulation removed from the control of the users (state-legislation). What is new and aggressive about this reconfiguration of the use of social wealth lies not so much in commodification, which is common in *campesino* communities and *ayllus*, but in that, despite clear inequalities and internal hierarchies in the management of these resources,

market-value becomes the substance and measure both of the wealth itself and of its control and regulation.

In the *campesino* communities, the commodification of resources is not only ruled by agreements to adhere to the communal structure and to fulfil political and ceremonial responsibilities. The rules are also, to a greater or lesser extent, constrained by conventions and collective agreements that subordinate the exchange of goods to the reproductive needs of the community-entity on the basis of a different economic logic.

For the urban and peri-urban workers and inhabitants, the struggle against price increases for basic services (drinkable water, electricity, transportation) is related to the defence of what can be called an indirect social wage, which is manifested in the prices of basic services. Unlike the company-wage, which the worker receives in pay or social security, this social wage has to do with the way in which the state regulates the provision of services essential for reproduction. The first type of wage has been most affected over the last twenty years by structural reforms and the deterioration of working conditions, while the second type is what is now starting to become an object of social dispute and which, because it affects people regardless of whether they work in a large factory or in an handicraft-workshop, creates the structural possibility of a global combination of the fragmented forces of labour.

In both cases, we are seeing the vindication of territorially-based demands, as the direct status of being a user of these goods is attributable to occupying a part of a territory. We are also seeing objectives of mobilisation that seek to halt the advance of the market logic and the rules of capitalist accumulation in areas of social wealth previously managed under a different economic rationality.

In this sense, using the classification offered by Tilly in his work on the transition from traditional, local power-structures to national and modern ones,³⁵ this defensiveness of local needs and traditions by the social movement created in Cochabamba can be said to be a type of 'reactive' collective action, similar to those Tilly studied in eighteenth-century Europe. The prior existence of 'communal and local solidarities' as the basis for mobilisation, and that the large mobilising force of the irrigators reclaims the vigorous tradition of the *campesino* movement's culture and organisational experience, formed between 1930 and 1960,³⁶ backs up this perspective. However, as we explained above, the *multitude-form* not only presents networks of association with a communal or traditional base; it also increasingly includes groups based on voluntary affiliation emerging from the intermittent and mutilated processes of social modernisation.

35. Tilly, Tilly and Tilly 1975.

36. Gordillo 2000; see also Gordillo (ed.) 1998.

Let us further develop this last idea. In the *Coordinadora*, while it has molecular organisational forms as its point of departure – many of which can be classified as traditional, because they are based upon pre- or non-market logics of access to land, water and public utilities – both personal and group-membership in the movement is optional, which is a distinctive characteristic of modern social movements. In the so-called traditional forms of association, wherein individuality is a product of collectivity,³⁷ there are internal mechanisms of deliberation, *deliberative consensus* and *obligatory participation*. This occurs in the majority of the local organisations that make up the *Coordinadora*. However, in the joint actions undertaken under the form of the acting multitude, the joining of unions, irrigation-farmers' associations and working-class neighbourhoods nominally constituting its organisational structure was the result of a freely made choice independent of any coercion, discipline or pressure. The *Coordinadora* does not have a mechanism for the surveillance, control or sanction of its constituents, and it maintains its appeal through the moral authority of its representatives, through the agreements and persuasion it has developed in regional assemblies and through its members' voluntary adherence to collective action. Unlike the union-form, with its 'modern' behaviours, creating a stable structure for controlling and mobilising its members, the *Coordinadora* lacks this and appeals, above all, to the fairness and persuasiveness of the cause undertaken in order to ensure the strength of its mobilisations. Thus, the difference between the modern and the traditional is highly ambiguous and sometimes arbitrary, as it would seem that, in general, social movements are simultaneously 'modern' and 'traditional', 'defensive' and 'offensive'.

Furthermore, the September and April mobilisations, both in the *altiplano* and in Cochabamba, have used, expanded and created public spaces in order to seek regional and national legitimacy for their demands. With traditional but also modern technologies of communication, they have markedly influenced public opinion in order to broaden their membership-base and, in certain circumstances, to persuade or force the ruling élites to change laws. They have made use of the freedoms to assemble, gather, deliberate and protest in order to make their needs known, to recruit members, to neutralise the state, and so on. In other words, the social movements of April and September employed and extended the institutional and democratic components of what is referred to as 'modern civil society', which are civic and political rights that are not only associated with multiparty systems, as Jean Arato and Andrew Cohen point out,³⁸ but they are, above all, citizens' rights that have been won by social movements

37. On these forms of constituting social individuality, see Marx 1973c.

38. Cohen and Arato 1992.

themselves – in particular by the labour-movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe³⁹ and the United States,⁴⁰ as well as in Bolivia.⁴¹

Lastly, the *multitude-form* has also presented 'proactive' demands and actions.⁴² As the social movement became strengthened, broadened and radicalised, the mobilised base of the *Coordinadora* began to seek recognition for its forms of assembly-style democracy as a technique for the management of civic demands; the institutionalisation of other ways of exercising democratic rights, such as the referendum carried out in March 2000 and the call for a Constituent Assembly; direct control of political power at the departmental level during days of mobilisation; and the proposal to implement a form of self-management for the provision of drinking water. We thus have a combination of defending previously owned resources (water) and demanding resources that previously did not exist (in this case, democratic rights and political power), which makes the multitude a profoundly traditional yet radically modern mobilisation, both defensive and offensive.

Identity. The fact that territorial forms and demands for the reproduction of life sustain the *Coordinadora* as a social movement as well as, little-by-little, the mobilisations in the city of El Alto against the increased costs of electricity and water-services and in favour of the creation of a public university, enables a range of possibilities for self-identification different from those that have prevailed until now. Since it is not the demand for access to land that brings them together, agrarian unions are not the centre of aggregation, although they can participate. Neither is it a demand for higher wages that calls them together, and thus it is not delimited by working-class identity, although it too is involved. It is water and basic services that bring together *campesinos*, permanent workers, temporary workers, small-business owners, workshop-workers, artisans, the unemployed, students, housewives and so forth. Despite the diversity of their occupations and their cultural practices, they all have a common need: access to water and public services as essential and principal components of their reproduction (for those with limited resources). Whether they have traditional or modern forms of access to these goods as 'use-values' ('ways and customs'/public services), they are generally people that 'do not live off another's labour'.⁴³

These three constitutive and shared components of all the sectors that participate in the mobilisation are grouped together to characterise what are called

39. Anthony Giddens 1982.

40. Montgomery 1995.

41. Zavaleta 1985; García Linera 1999a.

42. Tilly, Tilly and Tilly 1975.

43. On the concept of 'people who do not live off the work of others' and its importance for the formation of collective identities among subaltern classes in modern society, see Marx 1940 (including the two published drafts).

the 'ordinary working people'. This expression functions as the discursive site of self-recognition among equals, of reaching out to other social sectors and as the point of departure for establishing the group's collective narrative, which is constitutive of the group itself and of the group as a social identity.

It is true that identity-formations are, above all, expressions of meaning that demarcate social boundaries, that invent a sense of authenticity and otherness, with practical effects on the development of the subject thus constructed. But they are also discursive constructions that operate upon material structures, upon deeds, and upon the imprints of practical action. This means that there is no exclusive identity for those social agents involved in specific social occurrences, but neither are there infinite possible identities; there is an ample but clearly delimited space for possible identity-formations, corresponding to the diverse, complex, but delimited nature of the agents and their interrelatedness that give rise to events. In the case of the *Coordinadora* as a social movement, it is clear that this plebeian and hard-working identity that currently characterises it could well be replaced by other identities, depending upon the activity of the subjects and groups that are active within it. Nonetheless, the identity that is becoming the most strongly established is that of the 'ordinary working people', which has been able to integrate local urban and rural identities and, at the same time, to inherit the old national identity of the labour-movement, based upon the virtue of work.

Worker-ascendancy and solidarity-capital. It has repeatedly been said that the strength of mobilisation and the collective subjects that constitute the backbone of collective action were and continue to be the *Asociaciones de Regantes* (Irrigation-Farmers' Associations)⁴⁴ and that, in practical terms, the world of precarious labour and what remains of the old *union-form*, in terms of strength and mobilisation of the masses, has had its actions diluted in the territorial structures of the neighbourhoods, the irrigation-farmers and the regional assemblies.

Nonetheless, labour-leaders have a strong presence in public spaces; there is a critical discourse and a more elaborate understanding of contemporary capitalism's networks of power and control among the new cores of labour-leadership; the core of unionised labour has organising and activist-experience,⁴⁵ a legacy of the long trajectory of the *union-form*; and there is a material structure of labour-organisation that includes buildings, publications, organic ties to other occupational sectors (neighbourhood-councils, shopkeepers, transport-workers, *campesino* federations, university-students, professionals, and so on) which have been commonly incorporated as a technical and organisational productive force into the new social movement of the *multitude*.

44. Tapia, Gutiérrez, Prada and García Linera 2000.

45. Bourdieu 2002.

This has been a decisive contribution in terms of bringing together disaffected forces and diverse social demands. It has allowed regionalised demands and isolated efforts to be united in a great flood of globalised protest, and it has contributed to the development of mobilising strategies and symbolic struggles with a reach and impact never before seen in the history of social movements in Bolivia.

A subjective factor, but of great weight when it comes to forging alliances between such diverse sectors, has been the moral leadership of the regional labour-leader, making it possible for his personal and political trajectory to embody a rupture from the clientelist practices and perks of political and trade-union life that repeatedly ruin the autonomous actions of the subaltern classes. That this leader has refrained from joining a party and remains detached from the marketplace of electoral loyalties has allowed the creation of a moral point of reference for social commitment that has successfully aroused sentiments of belief, belonging and confidence in the autonomy of social action and in the clarity of the leaders' objectives and integrity. Ultimately, nobody mobilises without believing in the practical effect of the mobilisation, and nobody fights alongside others and for the well-being of others without some previously established 'solidarity-capital', which transforms shared and disinterested action into a recognised social asset, rewarded, sought and accumulated by the agents of social action. This solidarity-capital is a kind of symbolic capital that, as it becomes more widespread over time, lends historical continuity to social movements. But, at times like the present, when public suspicion prevails about the exploitation of solidarity as a political-party platform, the fact that leaders and social organisations with both longstanding and newly acquired social prestige can, with their actions, strengthen the appreciation of solidarity as a value in and of itself has contributed to the consolidation of dispersed networks of solidarity and to the growing formation of a space for transforming solidarity into a recognised and socially sought-after good.

Sovereignty and social democratisation. As a result of the extension of a series of local democratic practices to the departmental level, but also as a result of the need to take on various responsibilities of state-administration that were eroded by the mobilisation, the current *multitude-form* has basically functioned as a form of democracy and political sovereignty.

With the territorial structures as its base, and with the assembly, deliberation and direct consultation as daily practices for responding to specific matters related to property-boundaries, justice, shared labour, police-abuses, bureaucratic transactions and even clientelist ties to political parties and the state, these widespread practices of direct democracy started to form the basis for discussing and elaborating strategies of mobilisation, initially at the regional and provincial

levels. But, as the networks of mobilisation that focused on the same demand began to extend to the departmental level, this democratic knowledge and these techniques of deliberation had to both grow and be reconfigured in order to develop into a complex and systematic structure for the democratic exercise of public prerogatives of association, of shaping public opinion and, with time, of resolving and carrying out the administration of a public good (water), such that, without needing to think about or wish it, they became a type of social organisation that did not recognise any source of authority beyond itself. That is, they became a government established in a web of assembly-style, deliberative and representative democratic practices that replaced the system of political parties and legislative and judicial power in practice, and very nearly also the state-monopoly on the use of public force.

Neighbourhood-assemblies, communities of *campesinos*, of unions and of irrigation-farmers, provincial and regional assemblies, departmental assemblies and *cabildos* gave rise to a hierarchical structure that combined assembly-style and deliberative democracy at each horizontal level with representative and assembly-style democracy between the different levels. This allowed shared criteria to be developed among equals at the local level (territorial assembly) and the departmental level (*cabildo*) and an executive synthesis of opinions at the departmental level (assembly of local representatives, *Coordinadora* spokespersons).

This dense network of assemblies and plebeian democratic practices has repeatedly demanded rights from the state with its system of parties and parliament (February, April, September, October). It has also replaced the state as a mechanism of government, as a system of political mediation and as a culture of obedience. Hence, contrary to Touraine's suggestion that 'new social movements' are not political movements aiming at the conquest of power,⁴⁶ the *de facto* multitude is an extreme politicisation of society, with an organising force capable of questioning the relevance of the prevailing systems of government and the régime of liberal democracy and of establishing – provisionally, at present – alternative systems for the exercise of political power and of legitimate democratic life.

The virtue of this social movement is that it has arisen and it has challenged the current relations of domination, and, to the extent that there is a strong culture of local self-government, these logics of power and of assembly-style democracy can be projected to the departmental or the national level, challenging the form of enunciating what is public and the ways in which they are administered – in other words, challenging the form of government.

46. Touraine 1977.

This, of course, is not to deny the difficulty and the ambiguity with which the social movement's ambition for political power is taking shape. Coming from the popular classes, who are used to the economy and the moral resistance⁴⁷ of the dominated – driven by a logic of demands on and concessions from the élites, who are confirmed as the dominant class through these very demands and concessions – the development of a collective sovereign spirit is constantly supplanted by old habits of obedience to those who are supposedly qualified to govern, or by a retreat to local participation distanced from broader issues, allowing the broader issues to be once again taken up by the traditional ruling élites.

The history of the formation of a self-managed water-company in Cochabamba is an example of this constant confrontation between the serf and the sovereign self within the individual and collective behaviour of all of the subjects involved. Still, it is clear that the subaltern classes have, with their own experience, opened up a field of possibilities for the exercise of power, social democratisation and the transformation of the relations of domination, which could orient subsequent actions.

Institutionality and breadth. Unlike the labour-movement, the *multitude-form* lacks lasting mechanisms for summoning and consulting with its constituents that would allow it to afford them routine presence. Though the local collective subjects that constitute it continuously maintain assembly-practices, their joint action as a multitude is always an uncertainty that can only be determined in practice. Thus each call to mobilise is, in turn, a referendum on the vitality, the continuity and the weakness of the *Coordinadora*. This allows an organisational culture to be forged that sees unity as the result of patient work and not as a given that only needs to be called upon in order to make itself present, as has started to happen in recent decades with the COB, for example.

However, accompanying this collective virtue is a lack of structural and material continuity, of organisational permanence – that is, there is a lack of institutionalisation that would enable the ongoing monitoring of agreed-upon tasks, consultation about new objectives, and so on. Thus, at times, the *Coordinadora* consists of half a million inhabitants, while at other times it has no more than a hundred permanent and active members. Perhaps one way of overcoming this organisational shortfall would be the establishment, institutionalisation and symbolic ritualisation of the local and regional assemblies as assemblies instituted in the *Coordinadora*; the routinisation of a departmental assembly with a few established delegates who could be joined by others at any time; and the implementation of mechanisms for electing and revoking leaders in assemblies of delegates. Similarly, mechanisms for economic contributions need to be

47. Thompson 1979; Grignon and Passeron 1989.

developed, enabling representatives to carry out organisational functions on an ongoing basis, but also allowing a greater control of the rank-and-file by the leaders.

In this case, we can speak of a form of internal institutionalisation different from that proposed by Claus Offe in his model of stages of social movement, according to which institutionalisation leads protest-leaders to become incorporated into the dominant political system.⁴⁸ Internal institutionalisation, in contrast, not only combines the 'expressive' and 'instrumental' functions within the same social process, but it also upholds the initial demand of social action for a radical modification of the political realm – of its rules and its legitimate subjects.

Another difficulty faced by the *multitude-form* is its regionalised nature. Following the experience of the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba, there have been attempts to construct similar bodies in El Alto, Santa Cruz, Tarija, and elsewhere, which could lend a national character to this form of social mobilisation. This is made possible by the neoliberal policies themselves, which have made scarcity, precariousness and the attack on essential conditions for reproduction prevalent at a national scale. Achieving this local structuring of the social movements of the *multitude*, and their interconnection at the national level, would enable a large capacity to mobilise and make it possible to exert influence on the state. Yet, during this process, in the years to come it seems that the vitality of this form of social movement should first be established at the regional level. The national constitution of the multitude, should it occur, will be the outcome of a long and patient effort to bring together the trust, mutual support, leaderships and solidarities already patiently developed at the local level.

3. *The community-form*

Cycles of reform

Though it is quite varied, the current economic and social structure of the indigenous-*campesino* world in the *altiplano* and surrounding valleys – which produced the reconstitution of the communal-indigenous movement between April and October – has several critical, shared components.

Many of the mobilised communities and *ayllus* in the provinces of Omasuyus, Larecaja, Manko Cápac, Los Andes, Camacho, Murillo, Ingavi, Aroma, Tapacará, Bolívar and others can claim the social process of agrarian reform beginning in 1952 as the most recent precursor to their formation. This process allowed settlers⁴⁹ and communities bound by the *hacienda* to recover a part of their

48. Offe 1990.

49. Albó 1988; Rivera 1979; 1984; Paz Ballivian 1979.

land or take ownership of land they were temporarily occupying and expand it, making *hacienda*-forms of land-ownership and servile labour disappear. From then on, a system of land-ownership has taken shape that – in a flexible fashion and with regional variations – combines individual and family-property with, in some communities, communal ownership of agricultural land, and, in most communities, with pasture-land and water-resources.⁵⁰

This direct access to land, along with the domestic-rural textile, construction- and crafts-industries, has enabled the coming together of conditions for a familial-communal economy with a high degree of self-reproduction. Demographic growth, which cannot be absorbed by agrarian labour; the diversification of food-consumption encouraged by the state, the Church and institutions; the expansion of roads and the increased urban demand and industrial supply all modify flows of exchange and expectations of social mobility. Together, they have created new needs of consumption, work and income that, over the last four decades, have led to increased occupational stratification⁵¹ and an increase in the links – under relations of domination – between familial-communal production and the dominant market-, agrarian and urban-capitalist economy.

In contrast, other communities, some located in the provinces of Franz Tamayo, Muñecas, Bautista Saavedra and Loayza, despite the changes in 1952, have not fully consolidated the foundation for any form of economic autonomy or sovereignty over land-possession, and, therefore, maintain ties of dependency to landowners or their descendants, who still control local commercial and political power.

However, the majority of the community-*ayllus* that have sustained the mobilisations are structures of production, culture and membership that combine forms of traditional organisation with ties to the market, urban migration and slow processes of internal social differentiation. Land-ownership combines family-forms of property and ownership with communal forms; the rules for owning land are enmeshed with political responsibilities within the community-*ayllu*; labour-systems located in the domestic unit maintain non-market forms of the circulation of labour-power and of collective labour for sowing and harvesting; the system of rituals and of local authorities ties each family's alternating responsibility in the exercise of union-authority and in the series of local celebrations to the legitimacy and continuity of each family's tenure of farm- and pasture-land and their basic production-techniques, which are guided by cultural patterns reproducing the communal unit.

50. Carter and Mamani 1982; Mamani 1998; Mayer and Bolton (eds.) 1989; Morlon (ed.) 1996; Spedding and Llanos 1999; Van den Berg 1994; Patzi 1996.

51. Pacheco and Ormachea 2000; see also Pacheco 1998.

While the proportion of family-production that is incorporated into the market is increasing, as is the quantity of urban products necessary to meet consumption-needs, the *campesinos* are not fully commodified, nor are the communities mere aggregations of private landholders. The community is a social body of technological ties, forms of circulation of goods and people, the passing on of inheritance, the collective management of knowledge and resources, the accumulation of experiences and political functions and a projection of the future that both precedes and shapes individuals.

The market for land that is slowly taking shape in the *altiplano* is regulated by communal commitments and responsibilities. Labour does not circulate primarily as a commodity, and, while primitive forms of commodification do exist, clothed in an ideology of reciprocity, family-networks are the main source for supplying productive forces. These depend upon a complex system of labour-flows determined by social proximity, mutual need, the amount of time required and the result of the work, in addition to the fact that more than half of their needs for communal reproduction are met in a self-sufficient fashion. Hence their social position as comunards and not as *campesinos*, which implies the commodification of the production of consumption and the division of the land into private plots.

Overall, we can speak of the communities and *ayllus* as civilisational structures with cultural, temporal, technological, political and production systems that are structurally different from the civilisational constitutions of dominant capitalism.⁵² The encounter between these societal configurations and the development of relations of subsumption of the former to the latter first occurred as political and mercantile colonialism (Spanish colonialism), to later take the shape of productive and cultural state-colonialism (the republic). It was through racism that this arbitrary relation of domination-exploitation was first internalised and then 'naturalised'.

Throughout the Andean region, colonisation has structured two republics – that of the Indians and that of the Spanish, each with their own separate laws, but also with different social functions. Land, political power, legitimate culture and language and control of the mines, companies and businesses have been in the hands of the Spanish, while servile labour, taxes, obedience, prohibited language, clandestine gods and stigmatised culture have belonged to the Indians. The colonisation of the Americas, like any colonisation, was an act of force that established a divide between the dominated and the dominant, between owners and the dispossessed, but with the difference that the 'naturalisation' of this brutal act of force – its legitimisation, interpretation and justification – is

52. On the dynamics of the civilising process that accompanied the establishment of modern society, see Elias 1978.

made in the name of a cultural difference ('some are more suited to government and some to slavery'); by way of religion ('some are more civilised and some are profane'); or as a result of racial differences ('some are more human and rational than others').

It thus follows that all colonisation is also, discursively and symbolically, a 'race-war'. Modernity itself, with its social divisions, is the continuity of this race-war.⁵³

The Bolivian republic was born under these fires, which conferred prestige, property and power as a function of skin-colour, surname and lineage. The liberator Simón Bolívar clearly distinguished between 'Bolivianness', assigned to all those who had been born under the territorial jurisdiction of the new republic, and 'citizens', who had to know how to read and write the dominant language (Spanish) and be free of bonds of servitude, ensuring that right from the start, Indians lacked citizenship.⁵⁴ Subsequent constitutions, up until 1952, consolidated a caste-citizenship for the heirs of colonial power and an institutionalised exclusion from political rights for the linguistically, culturally and physically stigmatised indigenous populations.

The processes of democratisation and cultural homogenisation that began in the wake of the 1952 Revolution, far from abolishing this segregation, euphemised it behind a citizenship differentiated according to mother-tongue, place of origin, occupation, surname and physical appearance. Thus emerged a first-class citizenship, for those people that could demonstrate the symbolic badges of social whiteness (surname, social networks, personal demeanour) that positioned them as suitable for taking on government-positions, institutional or business-leadership and social recognition. Second-class citizenship was for those who, as a result of their rural origins, their language or their skin-colour, were 'discouraged' such that they would occupy subaltern positions, fulfil roles of obedience and experience restricted opportunities for social mobility. In the process, the colonial logic and the racist state were reconstituted. As in the sixteenth century, after 1952 a 'noble' surname, whiter skin or any certificate of cultural whitening that could remove the traces of indignity was an advantage, like credit, like ethnic capital that could lubricate social relations, grant social mobility, expedite bureaucratic transactions and grant access to circles of power.

This was precisely what the Katarist Indianist movement of the 1960s and 1980s spoke out against.⁵⁵ This movement successfully brought together a growing urban intelligentsia of Aymara origin, whose members took the first steps toward discursive development and passive influence in the communities. They

53. Foucault 2003.

54. Grüner 2000.

55. Hurtado, 1986.

did so by means of trade-unionism in the same communities that, twenty years later, led the most important indigenous uprising of the last fifty years.

The structural reforms of the economy and the state, initiated in 1985 by Víctor Paz Estenssoro and reinforced during the administration of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, were primarily focused on the 'formal' sphere of accounting in the economy; that is, on the minority-segment where the market-capitalist rationality of economic action predominated. Company-relocations and closures, rationalisation of the state-budget, 'free trade', tax-reform, deregulation, privatisation, capitalisation, labour-flexibilisation, the promotion of exports, and even the INRA law (the creation of the *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria*, 'National Institute for Land-Reform') were focused on favouring a business-rationality and the rate of profit in the management of labour-power, commodities, money and land. However, over time, they had dramatic effects on the living conditions in the communities.

Import-liberalisation was decreed in 1986, at first to halt speculation and to satisfy a dangerous unsatisfied demand of urban consumers who threatened to erupt in political conflict, and later, to adapt trade-norms to the neoliberal winds blowing in from the north, demanding that borders be opened to incoming transnational production and capital. Over time, this began to destabilise the flow of labour and products from family-communal units toward the city. As providers of three-quarters of the food-supply for the cities, these *campesino*-communal economic units depended upon price-regulation based on narrow and stable margins of productivity differentials between them. Beginning in the mid-1980s, this form of price-regulation, which had been in place for close to forty years, was destroyed by the increasing agro-industrial production (and different forms of modern agrarian rent) pursued in neighbouring countries. In this context, due to the development logic of the rate of corporate profit,⁵⁶ *campesino*-communal production was rendered structurally unable to participate in the regulation of prices that would afford it a share of rents (as a property-owner) and a measure of profit (as an investor and administrator of production). On the contrary, this subordination to capitalist rules in determining prices, increasingly strengthened by the liberalisation of the importing of agricultural products, not only started to hinder the replenishment of the effort expended (as direct producers), but it also started to demand a greater quantity of family-effort (either from other relatives or from other areas of work, such as artisanal labour) in order to ensure the simple reproduction of the productive unit.⁵⁷

Now, while it is true that opening up trade has also led to a decrease in the prices of various industrial products as a result of competition, this is always

56. Marx 1967.

57. García Linera 1998b.

proportionally less than the average effects on the *campesino* population, which due to its non-capitalist nature, structurally lacks the means to intervene in the regulation of the capitalist rate of profit and prices. As Nikolai Bukharin would have said, we are facing a dangerous opening of the 'price-scissors'⁵⁸ for *campesino*-communal and industrial products, producing an increased drain of unpaid labour from the communal civilisation to the urban-capitalist civilisation. The discursive expressions of a divide between town and country, heard from several mid-level leaders in the September-October mobilisation, could be interpreted as moral condemnations of those who overstepped the accepted boundaries of economic exploitation.

Similarly, structural reforms have attacked two other components of communal reproduction: urban economic diversification and the occupation of settled land in the eastern region by members of family-units and indigenous communities. In recent years, due to the new land-legislation mainly applied in order to gain access to land in the lowlands and to secure widespread labour-flexibilisation in all urban market-activities, communal-*campesino* units are under siege, thereby intensifying their dependence upon an economy of self-subsistence riddled with conditions of unequal exchange.

These limits are created by the obstacles that limit the expansion of the *campesino* agrarian border of the *altiplano* toward the eastern lowlands, as has been occurring for decades. Previously, due to demographic pressure in the west, where family land-ownership has been limited to just a few square metres, thousands of *campesino* families headed to the eastern region to cultivate the land under a subsistence economy, to carry out the long-lasting, territorially fragmented, traditional reproductive cycles of the communal structure. Today, thousands upon thousands of hectares have been granted to *hacienda*-owners, there is no longer any land for 'settling', and the few successful entrants into the market-economy (coca-production and contraband, which generate close to five hundred million dollars annually) are being proscribed by the state.

However, in addition, the possibility of a stable passage from the countryside (where close to 45 percent of the country's population is still concentrated) to the city is now also stymied by the precariousness of labour and the free trade that has literally destroyed thousands upon thousands of small informal, artisanal and industrial activities that had previously absorbed the workforce migrating from the countryside. This has put an end to many of their hopes for social integration, upward mobility and full citizenship, while enabling a space of openness and availability to new projects of modernisation, citizenship and integration, such as, for example, those that have been articulated by the discourse of

58. Bukharin 1982.

ethno-national indigenous identity for decades now, and with increased force given the new Aymara leadership in the CSUTCB's union-communal structure.

Indeed, one ideological and bureaucratic attempt to deter the consolidation of this national-indigenous identity was the presence of an Aymara professional in the vice-presidency and the enactment of the Law of Popular Participation (PP). Both created a multicultural rhetoric in which indigenous peoples were supposedly recognised in their cultural difference, but with equal public prerogatives. At the same time, at the institutional level, offices, centralised and decentralised governmental positions, financing and income-options were created, incorporating a dabbling urban intelligentsia that believed it had found a noble position in this kind of civilising crusade directed at the Indians – a position that could legitimise the sale of their ideological services to the new political régime.

The PP produced an administrative divide between municipalities, which largely fragmented and created a decentring effect on the indigenous-*campesino* movement's demands and on the mobilising structure of these demands, which dated back to the 1970s. The creation of 313 municipalities with financial prerogatives and economic resources started to locally concentrate the demands that had been previously centralised by the CSUTCB. This produced the real disengagement – not formal disengagement, as they continue to be members – of *campesino* and communal population-groups previously directly brought together and mobilisable by the CSUTCB.

In realising this effort to fragment the force of the masses, the bureaucratic-state rationality was decentralised and extended to social territories previously cut off from direct contact with the governmental apparatus and with greater potential for organisational autonomy. This state-recolonisation of territorial spaces was accompanied by a modification of what can be called the *degree of effectiveness* of political action and the *institutionalised rationality* of politics.

With respect to the scope of political intervention, the PP has created a normative framework at the local level that includes supervisory powers, mechanisms of representation (the parties) and the decentralised administration of resources. It has also entailed a cultural discipline with respect to 'municipal power' that has created an institutional sectorialisation in city-residents' access to opportunities for managing what is public at the 'national' level and countryside-residents' access to managing what is public at the local, municipal level. This territorialised dualisation of the depth of political intervention underwent a further division, beginning with access to these normative systems being regulated by legitimate language – from the Spanish language to the inaccessible language in the texts of the *Programas Operativos Anuales* ('Annual Operative Programmes', POA) and the *Programas de Desarrollo Educativo Municipal* ('Municipal Educational Development-Programmes', PDEM) – by efficient networks of strategic

intentionality (kinship-ties to national power), and by money and free time in order to establish the system by which political representation (the parties) is effected. All this excludes, in a 'naturalised' fashion, the indigenous comunards from control over both local and national politics, while these faculties for overall management effortlessly tend towards monopolistic concentration in the hands of family-networks that operate as longstanding administrators of state-power, and the administration of municipal power lies in the hands of élite villagers eager for cultural whitening.

Paradoxically, the old colonial hierarchies are reconstructed and renewed with the language of 'political modernisation', in which the Indians are excluded from any power that is not the clientelisation of their vote. The town-*mistis* redistribute local political power amongst themselves, and the *q'aras* occupy positions in the national administration.

The second component of the political dimension is that which establishes 'Popular Participation'; in other words, the logic and materiality of political action. It appears to be aimed at a new colonial 'eradication of idolatry'; only now it is political in nature. Communal practices and institutions – considered to be archaic and external vestiges of an inherently arbitrary and distorted 'political modernity' – have become the object of systematic repudiation and devaluation and their replacement by procedural liberal-representative schemes based on the individual vote, the party-system, the political market, the empowerment of representatives and the conceptualisation of politics as a negotiated surrender of political sovereignty. As pointed out in other investigations, these kinds of practices do more than just create processes of depoliticisation and the usurpation of public responsibility,⁵⁹ which have nothing to do with the republican virtue of the citizen and the establishment of a democratic régime of good governance. They also institutionalise the historical fiction of wanting to erect 'modern' political institutions (or institutions of real subsumption) according to specific Western canons, in a society that, according to the same parameters, is mainly non-modern or premodern (or one of formal subsumption).⁶⁰ Furthermore, this takes place in a historical context in which these same modernising élites have made every effort to dismantle the little bit of modernity there once was, such as large-scale industrial production, labour-unions and social security, which ensured effective citizenship.

To this we must simply add that, in the terrain of political institutionality, such contradictions rehabilitate a colonial rationality that legitimises and rewards organisational instruments related to the liberal representation of political will, those that are close to or belong to the civilisational structure and demographic

59. O'Donnell 1994.

60. Chávez 2000.

segments that endure through the surnames, culture and power of the *encomendero* colonialist castes. At the same time, it punishes, discriminates against and destroys the communal, assembly-style political systems of the indigenous civilisational structure.

The vindication of these political procedures and the abolition of their colonial exclusion, formalised by the PP, was precisely one of the demands implicit in the action of the indigenous movement in September and October.

We thus have four basic components that have made the formation of the indigenous social movement possible: a) socio-cultural characteristics, which make it possible to speak of a shared civilisational structure throughout the conflict-zone; b) an intensification of the expropriation-exploitation of communal labour by capitalist civilisation, in its neoliberal form, by means of the buying and selling of commodities and the precariousness of the labour-market in communities strongly tied to the trade-circuits between the countryside and the city; c) an accumulation, heightened in recent years, of politicisation and identity-construction around a resignifying of the past, shared language, the recovery of cultural heritage, and the construction of unifying myths and of an autonomous and possible future (indigenous nationalism), rooted in the meticulous work of a new generation of activists from the communities themselves, schooled in unionism and the organic life of radicalised political organisations; d) the failure of state-policies to incorporate indigenous demands, in addition to a pronounced reappearance of colonial exclusions, which have created a weakening of norms of social integration and a predisposition to the communities' distance or withdrawal from the political system and the dominant culture.

Broadly, we can speak of the contemporary indigenous world as a social structure subjected to three analytically distinguishable modes of injustice and domination: the 'injustice of redistribution' and the 'injustice of recognition', distinctive of the 'bivalent communities' that Fraser describes,⁶¹ and civilisational domination, which takes the form of a power-struggle in the substantive order of the rationalities of social integration.

Indigenous rebellion

Nonetheless, the sum of these components does not alone create rebellion. At most, it can produce states of societal breakdown and frames of mind predisposed to religious or populist messianism, which is also easy to demonstrate today in certain segments of the comunard population and peripheral neighbourhoods. Social rebellions like that of the *altiplano* are, rather, processes by

61. Fraser 1997.

which the community comes together, promoting highly autonomous political projects that depend upon other components with roots in the collective memory and in the ability to envisage possibilities of action that are rationally founded in this collective history, or, at least, in what is imagined to be this collective history.

The Aymara rebellion in the *altiplano* has been possible precisely because contemporary hardships have accumulated there together with historical legacies and representations of life that interpret the past and understand the lived world as an act of colonial domination that must be abolished. Herein lies the profound political significance of the action undertaken by the communities: in their action, in their symbolism, in their bodily discourse and in their form of dividing the world between *q'aras* and Aymaras, there is an full recovery of history, a condemnation of the racism that accompanies republican life and a proposal to democratise power, the public realm and the production of the commons. And 'the political opportunity' – in the sense proposed by Sidney Tarrow – which has allowed this set of social powers and secular civilisational divisions to act as a 'trigger' for social rebellion, has been precisely the government's attempt to commodify the water controlled by the communities, creating a context of immediate unity between the communities as they faced the imminent 'risk of death', which, according to Sartre,⁶² allows the pacts of practical loyalty among group-members to be renewed.

Furthermore, the presence of Felipe Quispe – a community- and union-leader – at the head of the CSTUCB allowed the collective predisposition that had accumulated over the long term in the indigenous communities of the *altiplano* and surrounding valleys to be concentrated into a state of insurgency. He embodies the contemporary indigenous identity's most highly developed discursive and political construction, and he has a long history in the struggle for the autonomy and independence of indigenous nationalities with respect to the state, partisan and institutional guardianship and incorporation to which many other old Katarist-Indianist leaders had fallen prey. He has a great deal of prestige as a result of his political leadership, his years in jail as a political prisoner and the ruthlessness of his language against the powerful – who he never looked up to, but rather down upon – and he has successfully articulated new and old *ayllu* loyalties in a social movement that has thrust the state-order and the republican configuration into crisis.

Here, the institutionality (the CSUTCB) and the personality of the leader – systematically tied to the communities, each and every one of which he visited for consultations on their joint action – were able to translate their shared

62. Sartre 1976.

experience of suffering and discrimination, individually endured by all, into an experience resisted in a communal manner. In this case, Quispe's speech performed the function of Bourdieu's '*la parole du porte-parole*'.⁶³ He fulfilled the role of explaining the situation of the communities, with sufficient force to publicly constitute the unity of these communities – to produce this unity and to mobilise the communities.

The social technologies of the communal movement

The Aymara uprising of September and October was not only an explosion of discontent, nor was it just a reminder that Bolivia is a country in which other nations are dominated. First and foremost, the uprising has dramatically revealed a series of mechanisms for social mobilisation that, like in April in the city of Cochabamba, indicate patterns and trends in a regeneration of politics and good governance in the country, in this case in the form of the *ayllu in action* or the mobilisation that enacts a communal-Andean civilisational structure.

1) The replacement of state-power with a decentralised, supra-regional, politico-communal power with several nodes (*cabildos*). Shortly after the protest, the state-system of authorities (subprefectures, *corregidores*, municipal governments, police-checkpoints, state-administration) was dissolved throughout the area where communities mobilised (Sorata, Cambaya, Achacachi, Huarina, Ancoraimas, Pukarani, and elsewhere) and replaced with a complex system of communal authorities (called union-leaders, but which actually operated under the communal logic of rotating public responsibility, tied to the legitimacy of familial-communal land-holding. This structure of alternative political power holds the community-assemblies (the *campesino* union) as its point of departure and basis of mobilisation. This is where decisions are made, and, internally, the only force that can mobilise them is the conviction, reached collectively in assembly, that the demand and the objective of the collective action are fair.

Above the assembly are the representatives of dozens of communities (sub-centrals), and above them are representatives of several subcentrals grouped in a provincial federation, which is the highest organisational level where the communal grassroots exert control over the actions of their leaders, as the leaders are also members that continue to work the land in their communities. It was this network that assumed the task of developing the capacity to mobilise the close to ten provinces in La Paz where most of the country's rural Aymara population is concentrated, supported by the Quechua-speaking communities in the northern part of the department and in the high-altitude regions of Cochabamba.

63. Bourdieu 1982.

As the blockade gave rise to large rallies, four interprovincial *cabildos* were established, with each one bringing together up to twenty-five thousand communards. They remained in permanent deliberation, while others remained in the blockades along hundreds of kilometres on the highways that led to the city of La Paz. As a result of these *cabildos*, blockade-committees were established with prominent representatives from the most experienced and mobilised regions. They were the real command-structure of the mobilisation, as they coordinated the grassroots with the top leaders who were travelling in other provinces or were in the city to negotiate with the government. And finally, there was Felipe Quispe and several CSUTCB leaders, who travelled from the mobilised communities to meetings to coordinate with other sectors (rural teachers, transport-workers, trade-unions) to official negotiations with the government.

For 18 days, nothing moved. Nobody travelled along the roads and no decision was made unless it was through these networks of power, which occupied highways, midway towns and the means of communication. In fact, the territorial authority in the rebellious zone shifted from the state to the community's union-structures and *cabildos*, and for 15 days they showed them to be efficient and coordinated forms of exercising governmental power across a large part of the country.

2) A communal system of production, applied to the war of movement. Having so many people on the roads for so many days was sustained by a 'shift' system, in which every 24 hours, the mobilised people from one community were replaced by those from another community so that the former could rest, dedicate a few days to their agricultural work, and then return once again to the protest when it was their 'shift' again. For every hundred people mobilised in one of the hundreds of blockades, there was a pool of another thousand or two thousand people waiting for their turn to move. Thus, a conservative estimate suggests that, in the *altiplano* alone, close to five hundred thousand communards took part in the protests.

The logistics of the roadblocks were also established within the communities themselves. Every mobilised group brought communal food, which was then put together with what was brought by other families and communities, in an *apt'apti*⁶⁴ that consolidated solidarities and, through the food, reinforced what was being done in the confrontation.

In addition, the mechanism that made any attempt by the military to remove the blockade unfeasible was the transfer of the institution of communal work – in which all families collectively work the land of each of the families – to the area of confrontation. All along the roads, powerful, productive human machines

64. Communal collective meal to which each participant contributes food (editor's note).

were set in motion, covering every metre of asphalt in rocks and dirt. As soon as the tractors and the soldiers had passed, this powerful agrarian production-force, which allows the land to be cleared or planted quickly, was now being used to blanket the highway with countless obstacles.

Objectively, the Aymara comunards militarily occupied the space and exercised their sovereignty over it by tightening communal institutions, both political and economic ones as well as cultural ones. Meanwhile, the state, when it did make an appearance, did so as an inept intruder, for whom geography and time were foreign and uncontrollable forces. Its only way to try to overcome this loneliness was with deaths, which thrust it into even graver problems. With the rising body-count, the Aymaras started to consider taking over the military barracks located in the rebellious provinces. In military terms, the state lost the initiative; it lost control over time, it lost control over the territory and it failed in its attempt at repression. This military defeat of the state's army is an event that will surely mark the subsequent steps of the indigenous movement in its construction of political autonomy.

3) The extension of communal democracy to the regional and national sphere and the production of a public ethic of civic responsibility. The pedagogy of democratising public life – in this case, the decision to displace state-institutionality, to keep water a common good, and to abolish republican colonialism – was, unquestionably, extraordinary, and it was carried out by applying the democratic knowledge used within the *campesino* communities to the cross-regional level. This allowed them to agree upon collective objectives, hold repeated consultations with the grassroots about the continuity of the mobilisation, arrive at a consensus on the demands to be pursued, coordinate the territorial defence of the mobilised communities in the face of the advancing army, and control political life in the insurgent areas.

Under this new form of political power, the democratic practices with which the population recovered its capacity for intervention and management in the formulation of the common good and the use of collective wealth were:

- a) The *cabildos* and assemblies, which functioned as public organisations for the exchange of rationales and arguments from which nobody was excluded, not even state-officials, who were considered as the equals of the indigenous comunards. That is, the assemblies and *cabildos* functioned as spaces for the production of real political equality and of public opinion. These are two basic components of what is called 'deliberative democracy', though not as complements to the rule of law as Habermas would have liked,⁶⁵ but as a

65. Habermas 1996a.

challenge to a state that has institutionalised inequality between men and women from different cultures.

- b) The participants in these concentrations of democratic culture exercised a principle of sovereignty, in that they did not obey any external force other than that collectively agreed upon by all. Hence the extremism with which the state met their decisions.
- c) Deliberations between equals were sustained by social movements (the mobilised communities), who professed an ethic of (local) public responsibility in which normatively regulated forms of action hold sway.⁶⁶ Certainly, this results in many of the collective values that guide members' behaviour being governed by prescribed and mandatory principles that may limit the generation of new substantial items of consensus. This occurs, for example, at the level of the community, where the public has the same territorial dimension as do the effectiveness of normative values. Hence, we can speak of the existence of a 'community-principle',⁶⁷ which compels people to act within the community under the implicit assumption that these bonds of unity precede any attitude that might be taken with respect to them. However, it is in the framework of large-scale collective actions where the public sphere, the public realm that interconnects collective subjects, transcends the framework of local normative regulations and tends to be the result of a new communicative interaction, producing new consensus and new collective norms.

Communal democracy fuses, then, *communicative action*, with which communards deliberate upon their agreements in order to discursively develop a shared vision for action, and *normative action*, which makes the agreements reached in this manner obligatory for the collective and individual subjects that participated in their development. This is related to the preponderance of the common over the individual in traditional social structures. However, above all, the assemblies seek to produce consensus in long sessions of mutual persuasion, and while the development of minority-dissent is also present, these minorities do not lose their right to dissent and to endorse a change in the balance of forces in a new assembly. The decisive element is not, therefore, coercion as to ensure enforcement, often symbolised with the threat of using the *chicote*,⁶⁸ but rather an ethic of public responsibility that demands those who have agreed upon a choice to follow through with it, to endorse it with action.

66. Habermas 1987.

67. Guha 1983; Chatterjee 1993.

68. Whip made of woven strips of leather (editor's note).

4) Politics of equality. One of the most impressive components of the social mobilisation, both in the declarations made by its spokespersons and in the collective gestures of the road-blocking communards, was the symbolic collapse of the prejudice of inequality between Indians and *q'aras*, between Aymaras and *mistis*. 'We must negotiate president to president', 'tenants', 'murderers' and 'butchers' were all phrases uttered by an indigenous person who, declaring himself as such, used tones, epithets and discursive representations previously reserved for the dominant élites. And so he was accused of being a racist, precisely for assuming the norm of the equality of all inhabitants.

The colonial symbolic structure – which had accustomed both colonised and colonisers to Indians speaking to *q'aras* with an attitude of submission, of request, of bowing down or of tearful demand – was suddenly fractured with the impact of an indigenous leader who was not afraid of them, who told them that he could govern them, and who did not plead but, instead, imposed himself. In the roadblocks, something similar was happening. Instead of children and the elderly begging on the side of the road, there were insolent communards who did not heed the passing voice issuing from the luxury Mitsubishis with tinted-glass windows. The Indians had risen up, causing fear and dread to overtake some families, who reserved flights to Miami or Madrid, just in case. Ultimately, while the indigenous people occupied the geography as an extension of their collective body, the others, the *q'aras*, became conscious of the illusion of their actual sovereignty. To them, the territory seemed to be a vast body suspicious of ambushes lying in wait, the control over which became increasingly diluted as the lights of their shopping malls became more distant. The punitive raid, with tanks and planes to clear the blocked roads, or to 'rescue' the vice-president's wife from the indigenous stain spreading from the hills surrounding the lavish homes in the south, was the foundational language being revived by the dominant élites.

The words, gestures, body language and strategy of these insurgent Indians had ruptured a secular ethno-cultural hierarchy by exercising and demanding the basic right of equality. The request was not an extreme one; however, it was sufficiently powerful to provoke a cataclysm in the system of dominant beliefs and to reinvent the meaning of the political.⁶⁹

69. 'Politics does not exist because men, through the privilege of speech, place their interests in common. Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community be the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single world: the world where there are and the world where there are not, the world where there is something "between" them and those who

Ultimately, what was exercised in actions was an economy of citizens' equal rights; the right to speak, to be heard and to be recognised by the instituted powers. Hence, once the previously inaccessible government authorities were forced to sit down face-to-face with the indigenous-*campesino* leadership, all the delegates of the communities demanded the right to speak, creating endless lists of speakers. The right of a social structure that sustains its economic productivity with the old Egyptian plough to benefit from the 'general social intellect',⁷⁰ from universal knowledge and from the technological creations of modernity; hence the demands regarding the lack of Internet in Patamanta and the lack of machinery for agricultural work. The right to public prerogatives common to the countryside and the city, for rural producers and city-residents; hence the challenge to negotiate, not only in shiny urban buildings, but also in the decrepit union-offices of Achacachi. The right to full citizenship for the indigenous and those of Spanish descent, for Aymaras and *q'aras*; hence the *mallku's*⁷¹ irrevocable conviction that an Indian could be the president of all Bolivians. The right, then, to formulate the norms of collective modernity and equality among cultures, languages, colours and surnames.

Interestingly, the demand for equality did not appear in the long list of demands presented to the government. It was, however, made explicit with the sophisticated symbolic strategies that evoked the texture of the collective body, the manner of occupying space, the drama of the gestures, rumour, insolence and jokes. It was also made explicit in the discourse of the assembly and the radio-narratives, which, in their memorable reporting on public information and plans for collective action in the Aymara language, without the governmental and military authorities realising what was happening, helped to create a kind of parallel public space to the official urban one, also demanding in practice the recognition of other textualities in the construction of the nation's social narratives.

5) Politics of identity and alterity. The April rebellion, but especially the September-October rebellion, was, above all, a symbolic war, a struggle for the structures of representing, ranking, dividing and signifying the world. As the dominant (colonial) mental frameworks were discredited, others intervened and rose up, guiding the mobilised action of those opposed to the established order. This is why, in order to understand the dynamics of the indigenous rebellion and its programme, its guiding strategy, we should look not only to its written form, but also to the other symbols produced by the rebellion and that, in turn, produced it.

do not acknowledge them as speaking beings who count and the world where there is nothing.' See Rancière 1999.

70. Hardt and Negri 2000.

71. Aymara communal authority, literally meaning 'condor' (editor's note).

These include, first of all, the use of the Aymara and Quechua languages to publicly weave – in the media, in assemblies and in dialogues – the fabric, the intensity, the depth and the steps of the uprising. Second, communal knowledge of the territory, of its roads, its importance, the ways to travel through it and to use it in their favour. Third, the use of systems of assembly-style deliberation, which created a large-scale system of consultation and collective implementation. Fourth, the logic of a communal economy with a high degree of self-sustainability, which allowed them to control the timing of the war in accordance with the long periods of planting and harvesting, and to disrupt the capitalist time of market-production and consumption.

But it is well-known that language, territory and different organisational and economic logics can be taken up as particular, regional or folkloric components of a greater social structure, as devalued belongings one would do better to leave behind, or as manifestations of a separate identity irreducibly different from those that surround and dominate it. Only in this case do language, territory, or culture and organisation become components of a national identity; therefore, what is important about them is how they are seen, interpreted, signified and desired, or, in other words, their form of politicisation.⁷²

In September's indigenous-*campesino* rebellion led by the CSUTCB, this is precisely what happened: territorial knowledge became the materiality of sovereignty that separated two worlds – theirs and that of the *q'aras*. Language, as a means of communication, became a means of differentiation between a 'them' and an 'us', determined by linguistic knowledge and how it was acquired. Participation in the organisational techniques and productive knowledge applied to mobilising action became a means of choosing to reassert one's belonging to a community that precedes everyone and moves community-members to imagine an equally shared and autonomous future – that is, one of a nation.

Together, these components of the social movement, through their tendency to be resignified, started to recreate the foundations for an oppositional cultural identity (apart from the dominant one), for a sense of collective affiliation and for an irreducible otherness. Because of the magnitude of this territorial dispute and the political autonomy acquired in this communal construction of a shared destiny, it has all the characteristics of a rearticulation of indigenous national identity, mainly Aymara, whose vitality or ephemeral existence will be evaluated in the years to come.

In general, nations are political artefacts, political constructions that create a sense of belonging to a type of historical entity that can confer a sense of transcendent collectivity, a sense of historical certainty in the face of the vicissitudes

72. On ethnic-identity formation in the case of the Ecuadorean indigenous movement, see Ospina 2000. See also León 1994.

of the future, a sense of a basic familiar bond between people who will surely never see each other, but who supposedly share a form of intimacy, of historical proximity and of possibilities of cohabitation that other people who constitute 'otherness', alterity, do not possess. Herein lie the importance and the prominent role that discursive constructions and leaderships play in the development of national identities; it is their capacity to articulate demands, predispositions, expectations and solidarities in symbolic frameworks of aggregation and autonomous political action in the field of dominant cultural, territorial and political competences.⁷³

Nations are social, territorial and cultural frontiers that exist first in the heads of fellow nationals, and which have the strength to become objectified in material and institutional structures. In this sense, nations are political communities whose members, those that see themselves as part of the nation, identify in advance with an institutionality that they recognise as their own and within which they constitute their social struggles, their abilities and their mentalities.⁷⁴ It is precisely the formulation of these symbolic frontiers in the collective imaginary – based on the visualisation and politicisation of the actual frontiers of the existing colonial segregation – that would seem to be the first in a series of national tasks for the current indigenous social movement. Accordingly, this movement is simultaneously a movement of national-indigenous construction.⁷⁵

National formations are, initially, performative discourses⁷⁶ with the strength to generate the processes that construct communities of political consent with which people define an 'us' distinct from 'others'. They do so by means of the reinterpretation, enunciation or invention of one or more social

73. Eagleton 1999; Miller 1995.

74. Balibar 1991b.

75. 'Struggles over ethnic or regional identity – in other words, over the properties (stigmata or emblems) linked with the *origin* through the *place* of origin and its associated durable marks, such as accent – are a particular case of the different struggles over classifications, struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to *make and unmake groups*. What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of division which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group'. Bourdieu 1991, p. 221.

76. Ethnic or regionalist discourse 'is a *performative discourse* which aims to impose as legitimate a new definition of the frontiers and to get people to know and recognize the *region* that is thus delimited in opposition to the dominant definition, which is mis-recognized as such and thus recognized and legitimate, and which does not acknowledge that new region. The act of categorization, when it manages to achieve recognition or when it is exercised by a recognized authority, exercises by itself a certain power: "ethnic" or "regional" categories, like categories of kinship, institute a reality by using the power of *revelation* and *construction* exercised by *objectification in discourse*'. Bourdieu 1991, p. 223.

components (for example language, religion, ethnicity, and a history of domination), which, from that moment on, become the components of differentiation and community-belonging that guarantee their members a collective faith in their shared future. It is a type of communicative interaction that produces, or unearths, or invents, an expanded fraternity, a broadened kinship that is able to create, first, a gravitational attraction toward certain demographic sectors that will feel drawn in, and second, a complementary effect of repulsion toward those who then feel excluded. For all these reasons, it is said that nations are 'imagined communities.'⁷⁷

But, at the same time, as nations are processes of remaking the collective subjectivity that creates a sense of 'us', they are also a form of producing the 'common', the common good that unites the group and differentiates it from 'other' groups. In this sense, they are political communities, as their articulatory strength lies precisely in the management, distribution and conservation of this common good. In this sense, the politics of basic needs, which contests the form of managing those common goods essential for social reproduction, is currently a social force that is, in some cases (such as the *Coordinadora*), leading to a renewal of the Bolivian nation's democratic and plebeian life, while in another case (such as the CSUTCB), it is enabling the formation of an indigenous national identity distinct from the Bolivian identity. It would seem that these are the two rising forms of collective action with the greatest possibilities for eroding the structures of domination and extending practices of politicising and democratising collective life in the years to come. If this is so, we are witnessing the spread of two new forms of social self-determination.

77. Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983; Guibernau 1996.

VI. The Crisis of the State and the Revolutionary Period

The Crisis of State and Indigenous-Plebeian Uprisings in Bolivia¹

It was Kant who defined the state as a union of people who set out to live according to the law, understood as the pursuit of freedom in a context of universal law and its enforcement.² More than seeing the state as the idea of the law in action, what we are interested in doing here is to highlight the understanding of the state as the 'common self' within a society's system of freedoms. However, it was Marx who drew our attention to the illusory character of this community.³ It is not that the state is not a synthesis of the community, but rather that it is an alienated synthesis, as it transfigures society's internal conflicts under the guise of the autonomy of the state's functions. Thus, the state can be understood as a synthesis of society, but a synthesis that is conditioned by the dominant part of that society.⁴

In recent years, the derivation and regulation school⁵ has been working on precisely those social processes with which modern state-structures and their spheres of political autonomy respond to different ways of shaping productive processes, to ways of managing labour-power, and, indeed, to the organisation of the transnationalised networks of the circuits of global social capital. This means that when we speak of the state, we are speaking about something that is much

1. García Linera 2004.

2. Kant 1956.

3. Marx 1972.

4. Zavaleta 1989.

5. Boyer and Saillard 2002.

more than a set of institutions, norms and political procedures; ultimately, the state is a conflictual social relation that runs through all of society, by means of the ways in which it secures the continuity of its system of needs (property, taxes, currency, labour-rights, loans, and so on) and by means of the way in which it represents the inter-relation between its political functions and its daily activities.

This understanding of the state as a totality was systematised by Antonio Gramsci, who proposed the concept of the state, in its 'integral sense', as the sum of political society and civil society, thus reclaiming the Hegelian legacy that holds that civil society is the constitutive moment of the state, which, in turn, with its institutional framework, synthesises the ideal ethic of a community – the customs, values and beliefs shared by the members of a society.⁶

The importance of beliefs as a fundamental element in the constitution of political power was what led Émile Durkheim to see the state as 'the very organ of social thought, and above all, the organ of moral discipline', which should, nonetheless, not allow us to forget the sphere of 'organised violence' as the core of state-power.⁷ Coercion and belief, ritual, institution and relation, civil society and political society are, therefore, constitutive elements of the formation of states. Max Weber synthesised this composition of the state by defining the state as an ongoing and obligatory political organisation that maintains the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.⁸

This means that there is a state not only when officials in a territory are able to monopolise the use of physical coercion, but also when this use is legitimate; that is, when the legality of this monopoly is grounded in social belief. This in turn implies, according to Pierre Bourdieu, a parallel monopoly on symbolic violence, which is nothing other than the capacity to impose and establish in people's mental structures those cognitive systems and principles of seeing and dividing the world that are considered to be obvious, valid and legitimate by the members of a society.⁹

Crisis of the state

Now, as Norbert Elias has shown, these monopolies that give rise to states are historical processes that need to continually reproduce themselves,¹⁰ such that

6. Gramsci 1955; Hegel 1958.

7. Durkheim 1997.

8. Weber 1968a.

9. Bourdieu 1998.

10. Elias 1978.

the state-ness of society is not a fact, or a permanent truth, but rather a movement. This monopoly on the 'capital of physical force' and on the 'capital of recognition' that produces the state in turn generates another capital: 'state-capital', which is power over the different types of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic), over their reproduction and their rates of reconversion. As a result, the context of social disputes and competencies in the state is ultimately constituted by social clashes over the characteristics, control and direction of this bureaucratically administered state-capital.

In synthesis, in analytical terms it is possible to identify at least three structural components in the organisation of the state that regulate its functioning, stability and representative capacity. The first is the *matrix of social forces*, both dominant and dominated, that determine the administrative characteristics and the general direction of public policies. Every state is a political synthesis of society, but structured hierarchically with coalitions of forces with greater decision-making capacity (the state-bureaucratic capital) and with other forces made up of groups with lesser or minimal influence over decision-making on important public affairs. In this sense, the different types or forms of the state correspond analytically to the different historical periods of structural regularity in the balance of forces, which are always the result and temporary crystallisation of a brief and more or less violent period of intense conflagration between the social forces that dispute the reconfiguration and occupation of positions in the control of state-capital.

In the second place, there is *the system of institutions*, of public norms and rules, within which all social forces hierarchically coexist for a sustained period in the political life of a country. Ultimately, this normative system of incentives, signs, prohibitions and social guarantees, which is objectified in institutions, is a form of materialising the fundamental balance of forces producing a type of state-régime and that, through this institutional framework, is reproduced through legal channels.

The third component of a state-régime is the system of *mobilising beliefs*. In strict terms, every state, in any of its historical forms, is a structure of categories of perception and of shared thought that is able to constitute – among ruling and ruled, dominant and dominated social sectors – a social and moral conformism with respect to the meaning of the world that is produced through the cultural repertoires and rituals of the state.¹¹

When these three components of the political life of a country show vitality and function regularly, we can speak of an optimal correspondence between state-régime and society. When some or all of these factors become irreparably

11. Joseph and Nugent 1994.

stagnant, diluted or broken, we are faced with a *crisis of the state*, manifested in the divorce and antagonism between the political world and its institutions and the flux of civil-society organisations' activity. This is precisely what has been happening in Bolivia over the last three years. What is most remarkable about this state-crisis is that, unlike those that repeat cyclically every fifteen or twenty years, the current crisis of the state is twofold. Paraphrasing Braudel, we can say that today there is both a '*longue durée*' and a 'short-term' crisis of the state-structure. The former has to do with a radical deterioration and questioning of societal, institutional and cognitive certainties that have continuously pervaded the various different state-orderings of republican life, which we will call *structures of state-invariance*. The 'short-term' crisis refers to the 'neoliberal' or recent mode of state-configuration, which we will call *temporary state-structures*. Despite their varied historical forms, these structures utilise, shape and leave intact the systems of power that produce the invariant structures. Let us look briefly at how this takes place.

1. *The weft of social forces*

Since the mid-1980s, the framework of collective forces that produced the contemporary so-called 'neoliberal-patrimonial' state started to take shape in Bolivia by means of the political and cultural defeat of the trade-unionism organised around the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (Bolivian Workers' Central, COB),¹² which had upheld various plebeian rights in the administration of the social surplus and in the management of state-capital (union-citizenship, worker co-management, and so on). It was based on this disintegration of state-aligned trade-unionism that a social bloc was consolidated, made up of fractions of business linked to the world-market, political parties, foreign investors and international regulatory organisations, which were the dominant actors in shaping public policies.

For fifteen years, decision-making in public administration (first- and second-generation structural reforms, privatisations, decentralisation, opening up borders, economic legislation, educational reform, and so on) occurred with only these social forces enjoying decision-making power and initiative, reconfiguring the economic and social organisation of the country with promises of modernisation and globalisation.

Today, this configuration of forces is rapidly being broken apart. On one hand, the disorganisation and depoliticisation of the social fabric – caused by

12. An organisation of large company workers from different productive branches, which for decades was able to bring together a broad front of the working classes from the towns and country. After the processes of labour-flexibilisation, company-closures and privatisations that began in 1985, their social base for mobilising was reduced to teachers, public-hospital workers, university-students and some urban guilds.

the defencelessness of the subaltern classes and the entrenchment of the concentration of state-power in élite hands over a fifteen-year period – has been reversed. The roadblocks of April–September 2000, July 2001 and June 2002 indicate a regional reconstitution of diverse social movements with the capacity, based on the strength of their mobilisation, to impose public policies, a régime of laws and even significant changes in the distribution of the social surplus. Legislation like Law 2029 and the draft Water-Bill, which sought to redefine the use and ownership of water, the adjudication of state-companies to private hands, the introduction of a tax on wages and salaries, and so on, have been either annulled or changed thanks to the extra-parliamentary pressure exerted by the social movements' blockades and the popular uprisings. Presidential decrees like the closure of the wholesale coca-market and its prohibition in the Yungas have had to be abolished for the same reason, while articles in the financial laws have been changed in response to the corporatist or national demands of organised social groups ('United Confederation of Peasant-Workers' Unions of Bolivia', CSUTCB),¹³ stallholders, retired people, coca *campesinos*, cooperativist miners, police-officers, and so on). This attests to the emergence of composite social blocs that, first from outside parliament, and now with parliamentary support, have sufficient strength to stop the implementation of governmental policies, to change laws and to use non-parliamentary methods to impose certain demands and the redistribution of public resources. What is important about these emergent forces is that, because of the nature of their internal composition (plebeian, indigenous), and their unifying demands, they are social blocs previously excluded from decision-making that, while they seek self-representation, also hope to substantially alter economic relations. Hence, their recognition as a force of collective action must necessarily entail a radical transformation of the social coalition that controls state-capital and the use of public goods. That is to say, it requires a radical transformation of the dominant state-form of recent decades, which has been sustained with strategies that marginalise and individualise the subaltern classes.

But in addition – and this is what is most remarkable about the social movements' current processes of reconstitution – the most cohesive, influential and leading forces of collective action are indigenous, understood as a distinct cultural community and a political project. Unlike what happened from the 1930s

13. An organisation of indigenous and *campesino* communities founded in 1979. It is based on 'grassroots-units' – the indigenous communities – and is articulated locally, regionally and nationally, with a great capacity for mobilisation, especially in the valley- and *altiplano*-regions where there is a centuries-old indigenous tradition of organising. With a discourse of national-indigenous demands, their current leader, Felipe Quispe, advocates the Indianisation of Bolivian society and the need for a government led by indigenous people.

onwards, when the social movements were organised around trade-unionism, which espoused *mestizo* ideology and was a product of the economic modernisation of the business-élites, today the social movements with the greatest power to challenge the political order come from an Indian social base, from agrarian areas excluded or marginalised from the processes of economic modernisation advanced by the state.

The Aymaras of the *altiplano*, the coca-farmers of the Yungas and Chapare, the *ayllus* of Potosí and Sucre and the indigenous peoples of the east have displaced the unions and popular urban organisations as social leaders. And, despite the regional or local character of their actions, they share a common indigenous identity-framework, which challenges what has been the unchanging core of the Bolivian state over the past 178 years: its monoethnicity. The Bolivian state, in all of its historical forms, has been characterised by its refusal to acknowledge Indians as collective subjects with governmental prerogatives. And the fact that the Indians are now, autonomously, the principal force making demands calls into question the characteristic of the state, inherited from the colonial era, that concentrates the definition and the control of state-capital in culturally homogeneous social blocs distinct from the different indigenous cultural communities that existed before Bolivia did, and that even today continue to make up the majority of the population.¹⁴

On the other hand, the very alliance between the dominant economic élites shows clear signs of fatigue and internal conflict, due to the reduced possibilities for appropriating the economic surplus as a result of the international crisis and the financial limits of the liberal state (privatisation of public companies, externalisation of the surplus, eradication of the coca-leaf, contraction of the tax-base because of the increase in precariousness). In a context marked by long-term pessimism, each centre of power starts to grab for itself, pitting itself against the others (reduction of income transferred to the state by capitalised companies, refusal of oil- and fuel-processing companies to alter oil-prices, renegotiation of the price of gas sold to Brazil, refusal to pay land-taxes, and so on), thus fracturing the shared destiny that, over the last decade, had guaranteed the consolidation of the social bloc that monopolised state-capital.

But, in addition, in terms of the longstanding or unchanging patterns of social structures, an element that is present as a backdrop to the business-bloc's crisis of authority and to the very rebellion of current social movements, born on the fringes of capitalist modernity, is the Bolivian economy's nature as an exporter of primary goods¹⁵ and as an enclave. The fact that industrial modernity

14. INE 2002.

15. Valenzuela 1990.

appears as small islands in a groundswell of informality and a semi-mercantile peasant-economy, though this may lower wage-bills, limits the development of a domestic market that can diversify value-added business-activity, in addition to consolidating their vulnerability to the fluctuation of prices for raw materials on the world-market, which tend to decline. In this sense, the 'long-term' crisis of the state is the political corollary of the equally 'long-term' economic crisis of the primary-export pattern of accumulation, unable to productively reinvest surpluses, and, therefore, unable to make domestic use of the extensive wealth necessary to build lasting processes of social cohesion and loyalty to the state.

We must not forget that modern national constructions, as acts of cultural and political cohesion, are built upon successful processes of retaining and redistributing the industrial market-surplus. Hence, the Civic Committees' proposals for departmental autonomy – repeatedly asserted every time there are hydrocarbon-revenues available – and proposals for indigenous self-government – used by different social groups to dispute the configuration of the state-power bloc and the institutional order – reveal the flaws of a longstanding economic order, which, in recent years, has only exacerbated its most élitist, monoproducer and externalisable components on the world-market.

2. *The régime of political institutions*

Over the last 18 years, along with the separation of powers and the centrality of parliament, political parties have acquired greater importance in the organisation of governmental institutionality. Backed by the recognition granted in an authoritarian fashion by the state, as parties themselves have never been relevant on their own, they have tried to replace the former system of political mediation carried out by the unions, which joined the collectivist legacy of traditional societies with the modern corporatism of skilled workers in large companies. The party-system, elections and representative democracy are currently the mechanisms with which the exercise of citizens' powers is prescriptively defined.

However, it is clear that parties have not been able to transform themselves into mechanisms of political mediation or into vehicles that channel society's demands toward the state. Investigations into the working of the parties, and the very complaints that are part of public opinion, show that parties are, above all, family- and business-networks where competition for access to state-administration takes place, as if it were an inherited asset, and in which the forms of association with the voting mass are basically organised around ties of clientelism and patronage.¹⁶

16. Chávez 2000.

In this manner, with the union-citizenship of the nationalist state destroyed, but with a new, modern, party-based and elective political citizenship barely visible, society has started to create or to revive other forms of political mediation and other institutions for exercising representation, organisation and political mobilisation, divorced from parties. These are the new, and the old, social movements, with their technologies of deliberation, assemblyism, lobbying and corporatist action. We can thus affirm that, in terms of institutional systems, there are currently two political camps in Bolivia. In regions like Chapare, the Yungas and northern Potosí, the institutionality of communities overlays not only party-organisation, but also state-institutionality itself, to the extent that mayors, *corregidores* and sub-prefects are *de facto* subordinated to the *campesino* federations. In the northern *altiplano*, several sub-prefects and provincial police-stations have disappeared over the last three years as a result of the mobilisations; in provincial capitals, 'community police-forces' have been created that protect the public order on behalf of the *campesino* federations, and every time there is a new blockade, hundreds of *altiplano* communities establish what they call the *Gran Cuartel Indígena de Q'alachaca* ('Great Indigenous Q'alachaca Headquarters'), which is an *ad hoc* confederation of militarised *ayllus* and communities.

Certainly, all this is related to what René Zavaleta once called the 'apparent state', in the sense that because of the country's societal or civilisational diversity, wide territories and numerous populations in what we today call Bolivia have forms of production that have not internalised capitalist rationality as a practice or as a technical reform of labour-processes. They have a different temporality for things, they have different systems of authority and perceptions of the public realm, and they advance different collective goals and values than those presented by the state as its worldview and destiny.¹⁷ This, which is a constant in the history of the different Bolivian states, is today undergoing processes of increasing institutional self-unification, coercive as well as symbolic, under the form of ethnic nationalisms and identities, which is producing a duality of political systems and principles of authority, in some cases permanently so (politicised agrarian-indigenous territories) and in others sporadically (the urban zones of Cochabamba, La Paz and El Alto).

The neoliberal state has, therefore, started to come up against fragmented and regional institutional orders that assert their own claim to the principle of governmental authority and the logic of political action. But, at the same time, this other institutionality, to the extent that it is rooted in the collective knowledge of that part of the indigenous world located on the margins of real subsumption, or, in other words, on the margins of capitalism as a technical rationality, is an

17. Tapia 2002c.

institutionality based on traditional, non-liberal corporatist norms, procedures and political cultures. This other institutionality is a challenge to the century-old historical simulation of a textbook- and institution-based state-modernity and political liberalness, which is not even respected by the *élites* that advance it, who, in spite of everything, have never abandoned the old method of seigneurial and patronage-based politics. Widespread corruption in the state-apparatus, which has now begun to affect governmental legitimacy itself, is nothing more than a modernised version of the old practice of perks and patronage with which the *élites* in power take on, understand and produce the function of the state.

Liberal political culture and liberal institutions, which are currently transcended by social movements and abandoned in practice by the *élites* in power, are a system of values and procedures that hinge upon the individuation of society; that is, the breakdown of traditional loyalties, seigneurial relations and non-industrial productive systems, which counts for at most a third of the population of Bolivia. However, despite this 'motleyness' in a society that is not structurally industrial or individuated in its majority, the state, in all its republican forms, including the 'neoliberal' one, has demonstrated a kind of political schizophrenia in building normative liberal régimes – modern institutions that do not correspond to the real logic of the social dynamic, except as a hypostatised superposition. Hence the widespread institutionality of the indigenous and plebeian social movements, which privilege 'normative action' over 'communicative action',¹⁸ challenges the validity of a republican state-institutionality that feigns modernity in a society that lacks, and is even deprived of, the structural and material bases for this imagined modernity.

Lastly, another paradigmatic moment in this institutional eclipse of the 'neoliberal' state, and potentially replicable on a greater scale, occurred recently when the armed institutions of the state, which are its substance and essential core, clashed near the governmental palace. As a result, not only has the structure of commands and loyalties that gives continuity and substance to the spirit of the state fallen apart, and not only has the principle of the state's cohesion and unity – which is something like a state's instinct of basic self-preservation – dissolved, but the fiscal mandate has also been impeded – the mandate that, according to Elias, is the monopoly that upholds the monopoly on violence and, together with it, sustains the state.

3. *The matrix for mobilising social beliefs*

For more than a decade and a half, the 'mechanisms of truth', which articulated the expectations, certainties and practical affiliations of important sectors of the

18. Habermas 1984.

population, were the promises of the free market, privatisation, governability and representative liberal democracy. All these proposals were well-founded illusions, since even though they never actually materialised in a substantial fashion, they allowed a realignment of the meaning of action and the beliefs of a society that imagined that with these means, and the sacrifices they entailed, well-being, modernity and social recognition would be attained. Upper classes, middle-classes and urban subaltern classes – the latter rid of their expectations of and adherences to the protective state and the workplace-based union – thought they saw a new path to stability and social mobility in this promise of modernisation, thus producing a new space for individual ambitions, successes and competences considered legitimate. Now, fifteen years after this collective venture, and in the face of a growing gap between the expected and actual results, there is, in some cases, a disappointed population going through a social divorce with respect to what is provided by the state, which, as a result is moving toward social pessimism. In other cases, there is an attraction to different convictions expressed outside of the state, or which openly disavow a good part of the state-dominated régime of routines and rituals.

The much-vaunted modernity has been converted into a return to forms of extracting absolute surplus-value and an increase in occupational informality – from 55 percent to 68 percent in twenty years. The promise of social mobility has only produced a greater concentration of wealth and a revival of ethnic discrimination with respect to the types of capital considered legitimate for advancement in spaces of power. Privatisation, far from broadening the domestic market, has meant the greatest loss of economic surplus of the last fifty years (the hydrocarbons) and the accelerated transfer abroad of weak social surpluses.

The system of convictions and mental frameworks that allowed the articulation of rulers and the ruled now displays an accelerated process of fatigue, as a result of the material impossibility of proving its validity, once again giving way to the population's cultural openness toward new mobilising loyalties and beliefs. In fact, new discourses, which have contributed to the erosion of the certainties of state, are now starting to be well-received in broad social groups, and they are beginning to use these proposals as ideas of power; that is, as beliefs for which they are willing to dedicate time, effort and work in order to see them materialised, and which, in regions of the Aymara *altiplano*, start to promote alternative forms of staging and ritualising power and leadership (the replacement of Bolivian flags with indigenous *wiphalas*,¹⁹ the whip and staff instead of the shield as symbols of power, and so on).

19. Indigenous flags with 49 coloured squares. Although the date of their creation is unknown, their political use goes back to the 1970s (editor's note).

Among the new ideas of power with broad appeal that are starting to bring together different social sectors is the national-ethnic self-assertion of the indigenous world, which has enabled a type of indigenous nationalism in the Aymara *altiplano* sector and the constitution of an electorally successful Left at the head of the Indian *caudillos* in the last general elections. Other proposals, like the state's recovery of privatised public resources and the increase of social participation and democracy with the recognition of non-liberal political practices of a corporatist, assemblyist and traditional nature (indigenous community, trade-union, and so on), are convictions that are displacing the state's commitment to liberalism and privatisation.

The state has lost its monopoly on the capital of recognition, and now, at least for a time, we are going through a period of transition of those cognitive structures that have mass adherence and are able to mobilise people. What is noteworthy about this cognitive change is that a part of the new organising beliefs of social convictions, while clashing with the discourses of neoliberal modernity, also affects the essential, foundational certainties of republican ideas of the state, such as the belief in a substantial inequality between indigenous and *mestizo* people and the conviction that the Indians are not qualified to govern the country. That the Indians, accustomed to voting for the *mistis* (*mestizos*), voted *en masse* for Indians in 2002, that the social leaders are indigenous and that the new Lefts are now led by Indians certainly tells of a cataclysm in the symbolic structures of a profoundly colonial and racialised society with respect to its form of mentally signifying and ordering the world.

Altogether, it is clear that in Bolivia the three pillars of the 'neoliberal' state-structure, and the republican state-structure in general, are deteriorating. And it is this overlaying of crises of state that helps to explain the radicalism of the political conflict, but also its complexity and its lack of resolution in terms of the construction of urban hegemony by indigenous social forces, to the extent that it is in the cities where the indigenous is subject to greater hybridism or dissolution amidst the development – not exempt from ambiguities and reverses – of a *mestizo* cultural identity, both *élite* and popular.

Still, it is well known that crises of state cannot last long, because no society can tolerate long periods of uncertainty void of political articulation. Sooner rather than later, there will be a lasting recomposition of forces, beliefs and institutions, which will usher in a new period of state-stability. The question that remains is whether this state-mutation will come as a result of an increase of authoritarianism from the fractions in power, with which we would have something like an 'authoritarian neoliberal state' as a new phase of the state. This could, perhaps, overcome the 'short-term crisis', but not the 'long-term' one, such that the problems would shortly manifest themselves once again. Or, in contrast,

there could be an opening of new spaces for the exercise of democratic rights (the multicultural state, the combined institutionality of liberalism and indigenous communitarianism) and economic redistribution (the productive role of the state and self-management, for instance), able to deal with both dimensions of the crisis by including more subjects and broadening state-institutionality. In this latter case, political events seem to have become so entangled that a democratic resolution to the neoliberal state's crisis will inevitably entail a simultaneous multicultural resolution of the republican state's colonial crisis.

Ethno-classist cleavages in the crisis of state

It was Zavaleta who affirmed that hegemonies also become exhausted, which is the same as saying that there are times when the state is no longer irresistible, and that the masses separate themselves from the cognitive frameworks that brought them to *desire* their reality, just as the élites in power *organised* the subalternity of the plebeian masses. Thus begins a period of crisis of state, as there is no self-respecting state that does not guarantee its durability by means of a moral concord between the governing élites' strategies of reproduction and the ambitions and toleration of the subalterns. This means that the state is, above all, an apparatus for the production of ideology, of symbolic schemes that legitimise the monopolies of power. The coercion wielded by the state is, therefore, only the *ultima ratio* of any political power; but even for this, it must be underpinned by the legitimacy and unity of its own force, which is precisely what ruptured in February 2003, when the police and the military killed each other near the Plaza Murillo, in the wake of a police-revolt condemning an increase in taxes on wages and salaries.

However, the October 2003 uprising was the greatest expression of mass dissent with respect to the 'neoliberal-patronage' state and, therefore, of the exhaustion of this state-*form*, at least with the characteristics that we have known it for to date. If all crises of state generally go through four stages (manifestation of the crisis, transition or systemic chaos, the contested emergence of a new state-order, consolidation of the state), October – with its hundreds of thousands of Indians and the urban masses rebelling in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, culminating with President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's flight from the country – unmistakably marked the beginning of the transition-stage.

Constitutional succession, more than an attachment to parliamentarianism, was the people's attachment to their old predilection for the personalisation of power, which normally makes the rebellious masses believe that a change of personnel is in itself a change in the régime of power. But there was also a kind

of historical lucidity with respect to the consequences, which, in the current balance of forces, would entail the end of liberal institutionality.

Yet, if the people rebelling in October were sure of anything, it was their irreversible break from the neoliberal state's hegemonic system of beliefs. Nonetheless, just as there is no legitimate state-domination without the consent of the dominated (which has been eroding in Bolivia since the blockades in 2000), there is also no successful dissent without the capacity to advocate an alternative state-order. This is precisely what the insurgents came up against behind each barricade; that they were able to paralyse the state, but the barricades themselves were not an alternative and legitimate plan for power. Hence this ambiguous and confusing truce, in which the enlightened communicator of the old élites channels the minimal demands of those rebelling (Sánchez de Lozada's resignation, the Constituent Assembly, a new hydrocarbons-law), at the same time that it leaves intact the entire governmental apparatus of neoliberal reform (capitalisation, *superintendence*, the flexibilisation of labour).

Revolutionary period

It was Marx who put forward the concept of the 'revolutionary period' in order to understand the extraordinary historical periods of dizzying political changes, of abrupt changes in the positions and the power of social forces, of repeated crises of state, of class-recomposition, of collective identities, of their alliances and their political forces advanced by repeated waves of social uprising, by the ebbs and flows of social rebellions, separated by periods of relative stability, but that at every turn either partially or totally challenge or demand the modification of the general structure of political domination.

A *revolutionary period* is characterised as a relatively long period, of several months or years, of intense political activity, in which: a) sectors, blocs or social classes, previously apathetic or tolerant of their rulers, engage in openly challenging authority and assert their rights or collective demands, by means of direct mobilising actions (the Water- and Gas-Coalitions, CSUTCB, indigenous people, neighbours, coca-farmers, irrigation-farmers, and so on) a part or all of these mobilised sectors actively consider the need to seize state-power (such as the *Movimiento al Socialismo*,²⁰ CSUTCB and COB); c) support for and adherence to these proposals emerges from important sectors of the citizenry (hundreds

20. MAS, the political organisation led by Evo Morales. More than a party in the strict sense, it is an electoral coalition of several urban and rural social movements, grounded in the deliberation of assemblies of communities and unions.

of thousands mobilised in the Water-War, against the *impuestazo* (tax-hike), in the Gas-War, in elections supporting Indian candidacies), such that the separation between rulers, who make the decisions, and the ruled, who abide by these decisions, begins to disintegrate, as a result of the masses' increasing participation in political affairs; and d) the rulers' incapacity to neutralise these political aspirations, with the consequent polarisation of the country in several 'multiple sovereignties',²¹ which fragment society (the famous principle of 'authority' was lost in April 2000, which continues to the present).

In *revolutionary periods*, societies become fragmented into coalitions of social blocs with proposals, discourses, leaderships and plans for political power that are antagonistic and incompatible with each other, producing 'cycles of protest'²² or waves of mobilisation, followed by retreats and moments of regression and stability. In these cycles, the mobilised masses demonstrate the rulers' weakness (of Hugo Banzer in April and October 2000 and June 2001; of Jorge Quiroga in January 2002; of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in February and October 2003), they 'infect'²³ or incite other sectors to use mobilisation as a mechanism for achieving the fulfilment of their own demands (teachers, pensioners, landless peasants, the 'sandwich-generation', universities), and they affect the interests of certain sectors of the ruling bloc, with the resulting imbalance in the power-structure. This produces responsive actions from those affected (the so-called business-civic-political 'half-moon' in the east), and then, therefore, another wave of mobilisation, thereby generating a process of political instability and turbulence that is self-sustaining.

Not every *revolutionary period* culminates in a revolution, understood as a forced change in state-power, which would, therefore, have to be preceded by a revolutionary or rebellious situation. There are *revolutionary periods* that can also produce a restoration of the old régime by political force (a *coup d'état*), or a negotiated and peaceful modification of the political régime, by means of the partial incorporation (moderate reformism) or substantial incorporation (radical reformism) of the rebels and their proposals for change in the power-bloc.

A *revolutionary period* is precisely what characterises the current political situation in Bolivia. Since 2000, social sectors are being increasingly included in deliberation and political decision-making (water, land, gas, Constituent Assembly) through their union-, community-, neighbourhood- or trade-based organisations; there is an ongoing weakening of governmental authority and fragmentation of state-sovereignty, and, of course, there is a growing polarisation of the country

21. Tilly 1993.

22. Tarrow 1996b.

23. Oberschall 1993b.

into two social blocs with radically different and competing programmes for the economy and the state.

On one political pole, there is the fundamental core of the force of collective action bearing influence on the state, and those who clearly advance a different programme for the country than what has existed to date. The rural-*campesino* and urban working-class current of the indigenous movement clearly defines the ethno-national, regional and class-features of this pole. Altogether, this pole proposes an economy based on the domestic market, with the *campesino* community and artisanal, familial and urban microenterprise-activity at its core; on a state with a revitalised role as producer and force for industrialisation; and on indigenous leadership of the new state.

On the other pole structuring the political field, there lies the sector that has a clear image of what the country should be, in terms of its ties to foreign markets, the role of foreign investment, the subordination of the state to private business and the preservation, or restoration, of the old order that exalted them (though their viability is a matter for another debate), and for whom it is the agro-exporter, financial and oil-company owners who have the most dynamic, modernising and growth-promoting role in national economic activity. But, at the same time, they are sectors that, while they have created an openly racialised discourse, are rooted in the eastern and south-eastern region of the country, precisely where the social-movement pole has not extended its organisational reach, despite the existence of some structures of collective action.

This means that the political polarity has three simultaneous components giving it shape: it has an ethno-cultural base (indigenous people/*q'aras-gringos*), a class-base (workers/business-owners), and a regional base (the east/half-moon). In the case of the 'Left' pole, the mobilising identity is predominantly ethno-cultural (the national-indigenous), while working-class identity has been subsumed into it (in a new type of indigenous workerism) or else complements its leadership in a secondary fashion (COB, factory-workers, cooperativists). In the case of the polarity of the 'Right', the mobilising and discursive identity is of a regional nature, thus the importance of the civic committees lies in the articulation of these conservative forces.

This is leading to a dissociation between economic might in 'the east' and the political might of the social movements in 'the west', and as a result, to a crisis of stability, as the elements of authority are distributed across two different areas, in two different regions, without the immediate possibility of one defeating or displacing the other from the position it holds. The rising economic power, despite its problems, has shifted from the west to the east (foreign investment in hydrocarbons, services, agro-industry), but the socio-political power of mobilisation has been strengthened in the west, giving way to a new uncertainty

with respect to the geographic extent of state power in the coming years. What is interesting about this, which we could call the *October paradox*, is that this regional separation simultaneously expresses a clearly differentiated ethnic and class-separation and confrontation: on one hand, business-owners in the east (the Santa Cruz, Beni and Tarija departments) with economic power, and, on the other hand, the indigenous people and plebeian sectors in the west (La Paz, Cochabamba, Potosí, Oruro) with political power, and with their eyes on a state, a bureaucracy and a relation of governmental political forces that territorially, socially and culturally do not properly express the new economic, geographic, class- and political configuration of Bolivian society. Certainly, there are business-owners, indigenous people, *mestizos*, workers and *campesinos* throughout the country; but the rising, articulating discourses and identities of the regions have these different qualities as a result of people's varying class-origin, ethnic attachment and territorial roots.

Altogether, the map of the balance of the country's socio-political forces reveals an extremely polarised political field, with tendencies toward resolution by force, both military coups (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* – 'Revolutionary Nationalist Movement', MNR)²⁴ and uprisings (CSUTCB and COB) and toward electoral outcomes, both those that restore the old régime (*Acción Democrática Nacionalista* – 'Nationalist Democratic Action', ADN)²⁵ and those that progressively transform it (MAS). In each such case, none of the forces or tendencies of either extreme nor those favouring moderate outcomes have been able to bring together a majority-bloc with the other forces, and much less so with other segments of the citizenry, who, though they may not seem to be organised and visible forces, are indispensable for producing a social leadership capable of having a lasting impact upon and power over the state. From the perspective of the social movements and their prospects for an indigenous-plebeian transformation of power-structures, it is clear that they are pursuing two alternatives: an electoral route of gradual, institutional changes, headed by the candidacy of Evo Morales, and an insurrectional route of revolutionary retransformation of the state.

In the former case, it would be necessary to combine an electoral social bloc around Morales, with a broad and negotiated consensus with other leaders and social movements, without whose support Morales's triumph would be impossible. For the municipal elections as well as for the Constituent-Assembly and general election, whether they are brought forward or take place as planned in

24. A political party that advanced the 1952 Revolution and subsequently, in the 1980s, the liberal reforms indicated by the so-called Washington Consensus.

25. A party founded by dictator Hugo Banzer after the fall of his dictatorship, taking him to success in later elections and to his 1997–2002 stint as president of the republic.

2007, this social bloc must include all the social movements with real *political strength*, in order to create a popular and indigenous pole strong, compact and unified enough to present a credible governmental alternative with capacities of leadership, broad social support and sufficiently robust proposals for change, such that it can attract urban, middle-class and rising popular layers, and even segments of business tied to the domestic market, who have so far been reluctant to accept an indigenous government and who, indeed, by withholding their support, would make an indigenous candidate's electoral triumph and prospects for governability impossible.

However, with either of the two routes – which are not necessarily contradictory, but rather could be complementary – the indigenous-plebeian bloc must consolidate a hegemonic capacity (in Gramsci's terms), understood as the intellectual and moral leadership of the social majority of the country. There will be no electoral triumph or victorious rebellion without extensive and patient work to unite the social movements and practical, ideological dissemination as to produce a political, moral, cultural and organisational leadership of the indigenous-popular bloc over the majority of the popular and middle-classes in Bolivian society.

The Struggle for Power in Bolivia¹

The crisis of the state, renewal of élites and extension of rights

Bolivia is experiencing the most intense period of socio-political struggle of at least the last fifty years, and perhaps the last hundred years. We are faced with a context of widespread and extended struggle over the reconfiguration of economic power, political power and cultural power. We can describe this conflictual context as a general crisis of state. What are its symptoms?

Crisis of the economic model

A structural element that sustains and has produced this political crisis is the increasing visibility of the limits to the model of economic growth applied over the last twenty years. As we know, two decades ago, the country's political and economic élites adopted a project of economic modernisation, of extending employment and social mobility by reducing the productive role of the state, privatising state-owned companies and opening up the markets. It was said that with these measures, the country was going to grow 10 percent annually, that social welfare was going to improve, and that hundreds of thousands of jobs would be created.

1. Text excerpted from García Linera 2005a.

Twenty years after these reforms were put in place, the results have been literally catastrophic in terms of their social and economic effects. The rate of growth of the gross national product (GNP) from the time of capitalisation to the present is surprisingly modest: in 1997, 4.9 percent; in 1998, 5 percent; in 1999, 0.4 percent; in 2000, 2.2 percent; in 2001, 1.5 percent; in 2002, 2.7 percent; and in 2003, 2.4 percent. This yields an average annual GNP growth of 2.7 percent for these seven years.² If we subtract from this the annual rate of population-growth of 2.2 percent,³ the economy has actually grown by an annual average of 0.5 percent over these years. If we compare these figures with the promise made at the time of capitalisation, of an annual growth-rate of 10 percent, it is clear that the capitalisation-process has been an economic failure with respect to the expectations set for it.

In comparative terms, between 1991 and 2002, a time of free markets and foreign investment, the economy grew by an annual average of 3.1 percent, very far from the historical record for average annual growth of 5.6 percent, between 1961 and 1977,⁴ when the 'producer-state' prevailed. In the years to come, these figures could be even weaker, if, as has so far been the case, we continue to see a structural decline in foreign investment in the country, which went from 1.026 billion dollars in 1998 to 832 million dollars in 2000,⁵ falling to 160 million dollars in 2003.⁶

Though the growth-rate over the past two years is once again above 3.5 percent, and there has been a notable growth in exports (2.1 billion dollars in 2004), these are largely based on the growth of hydrocarbons-activity,⁷ which, at least until June 2005, is in the hands of foreign investors who repatriate the gas-surplus abroad.

In terms of development-strategy, the model of privatisation and capitalisation of public companies began in 1989 and aimed to attract foreign investment that could improve business-productivity, increase state-revenues, widen the modern bases of the Bolivian economy and drive forward social well-being, which is ultimately the purpose of any public policy.

However, informal employment has grown from 58 percent to 68 percent over the last decade and a half,⁸ while seven out of ten jobs are low quality, with handicraft-techniques and semi-waged occupational relations.

2. AAVV 2004.

3. INE 2004.

4. PNUD 2004.

5. INE 2003.

6. 'Data submitted by the Bolivian National Bank', in *La Razón*, 28 April 2004.

7. *Nueva Economía*, 27 February 2005.

8. Arze 1999.

In the world of waged work, according to the Minister of Economic Development Horst Grebe, eight out of ten jobs are precarious, inadequate and poorly paid.⁹ In recent decades, Bolivia has undergone an economic regression, as a result of the increasing *unwaging* of its occupational activity.

All this is producing an intensification of the catastrophic dualisation of the country's economic structure. Large companies with waged labour-relations only employ 7 percent of the working population; small and medium companies employ 10 percent, while family-businesses, with traditional labour-relations, employ a little more than 80 percent of the working population. In contrast, large companies generate 65 percent of GNP, while the family-based economy produces just 25 percent of GNP.¹⁰

The unemployment-rate increased from 3 percent in 1994 to 8.5 percent in 2001,¹¹ and, according to the CEDLA, in 2003 it will have risen to 13 percent,¹² which is a higher rate of unemployment than during the economic crisis and dislocation of production in the 1980s. Moreover, with respect to the contribution of the capitalised companies to employment, they employ close to 6,100 people,¹³ 5,000 workers less than the 11,100 people that worked prior to capitalisation.¹⁴ With respect to employment-income, despite the supposed 2.7 billion dollars of investment from the capitalised companies and the 7.3 billion dollars from all the foreign direct investment (FDI) – according to the neoliberal economists – the average income for Bolivians in 2002 is about 1,100 dollars, similar to that of 1982 and less than that of 1978, when it was 1,250 dollars.¹⁵ In recent years, the estimates of the INE indicate a reduction of 13.5 percent in Bolivians' average income between 1999 and 2003.¹⁶

In terms of reducing social inequalities, the reforms and the privatising development-model have had a negative effect. According to the World Bank, in the last decade in Bolivia there has been a constant growth in the difference between the revenues of the poorest sector and the wealthiest sector. While in Latin America as a whole the average difference is 1 to 30, in Bolivia it is 1 to 90, and in the countryside it climbs to 1 to 170, making us one of the most unequal countries in the world.¹⁷

Certainly, part of these deplorable figures regarding the performance of the national economy have structural determinants, which go back decades and

9. *La Prensa*, 7 July 2004.

10. *Nueva Economía*, 28 December 2004.

11. PNUD 2004.

12. Huanca 2004.

13. Mercado 2002.

14. Valdivia 1998.

15. PNUD 2004.

16. INE 2004.

17. De Ferranti, Perry, Ferreira and Walton 2004.

even centuries; strictly speaking, therefore, we cannot say that capitalisation or foreign investment are the only causes of these imbalances. Nonetheless, the development-model based on foreign investment as the productive engine of the economy has had the following effects:

- 1) Drastically deepening economic inequalities, increasing the rate of concentration of wealth, increasing unemployment and the precariousness of working conditions, limiting the rates of growth and the redistribution of wealth.
- 2) Inaugurating a type of economic development based exclusively on the productive role of foreign investment, with this investment as a kind of enclave in countries like ours, with high levels of technological investment, little job-creation, no productive diversification and repatriation (exporting) of profits.
- 3) Breaking the ties that integrate, on the one hand, the modern and globalised economy in the country, that includes close to 28 percent of the Bolivian population,¹⁸ and, on the other hand, the traditional *campesino* economy, made up of 550,000 family-units (35 percent of the Bolivian population) and the family-handicraft mercantile economy, including 700,000 urban units, comprising 37 percent of the national population.¹⁹ For decades, private investment in production has been limited (no more than 2 percent of GDP between 1985 and 2002),²⁰ and, throughout history, it has been the state, despite its corruption and occasional inefficiency, that has helped to expand industrial relations in Bolivia, to integrate regional markets, to create jobs and to provide subsidised services to populations in extreme poverty, thereby creating some spaces of fusion between the modern and the traditional, in addition to mechanisms enabling social mobility, essential features for any process of integration that involves such unique and different cultural populations as those that inhabit Bolivia.

Currently, with capitalisation and its rules for profit-making and the repatriation of the economic surplus, we have a tiny modern bullet-train linked to processes of globalisation, and several gigantic primitive wagons moored in technologies from the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, relegated to a type of internal degradation, without bridges or links that would allow these majority productive sectors to move toward economic modernity. The fact that the family-based

18. Laserna 2004.

19. Grebe 2002.

20. INE, cited in *La Prensa*, 29 August 2004. The Fundación Milenio cites a report by the Treasury that states that in 2001, private Gross Domestic Fixed-Capital Formation (GDFCF) was 89 million dollars, while in 2002 it was 84 million dollars. Fundación Milenio 2003.

economy is the material foundation of the groups mobilised in recent years (peasants, residents, landless peasants, coca-farmers, trade-unionists, urban indigenous people, cooperativists, colonist-farmers) is based precisely on this dissociation between the economic spheres of Bolivian society.

Crisis of the short-term components of the state

Stemming from the crisis of the model of economic growth, apparent since 1999, we have started to see a process of social delegitimation of the political system, of a fracture in conservative beliefs, of frustration over the gap between the promises of modernity and the actual results achieved, and, as a result, of society's openness to new beliefs and loyalties, and of the articulation of new demands centring around what Hegel defined as the system of needs (defence of the basic conditions of reproduction: water, land, energy-services), and the system of freedoms (Constituent Assembly, indigenous self-government, community-democracy, and so on).

One useful means of characterising the current socio-political context is to observe the fracture of the components present in any state. It is well-known that all states have three large constitutive blocs: a balance of forces, a system of institutions and a system of beliefs. Let us see what has happened in each one of these components of the state.

The balance of forces that characterised the Bolivian state between 1985 and 2000 was based on a concentration – a monopolisation – of bureaucratic and administrative capital and of decision-making power. It was a power-bloc made up of export-sectors (basically mining and agribusiness), a part of international banking, foreign direct investment and multilateral financial and development-agencies, which now hold 85 percent of our foreign debt. This was a power-bloc that took shape in the 1980s and 1990s, displacing the corporatively organised blocs such as the unions of the Bolivian Workers' Central (COB), thus giving it relative political stability in the 1990s.

Today, this balance of forces has been drastically changed. Other sectors and social groups, previously without any leverage or political power, now have the capacity to change laws, to change presidents, and to change public policies. That is, the power-bloc that characterised Bolivian society for twenty years has been fractured, and other sectors, outside that power-bloc, have for four years now begun to build forces capable of altering the ways by which public policy is influenced. Therefore, the first component of the neoliberal-patrimonial state has been weakened.

Another element of the crisis of state can be found in the issue of institutions. From 1985 to 2000, democratic institutionality was characterised by the division

of executive, legislative and judicial powers; the *de facto* subordination of the judiciary to the executive, the *de facto* bribing of the legislature by the executive, and so-called negotiated governability, which consisted of the formation of majority-blocs in parliament that gave stability to the president. In exchange, the president redistributed civil-service jobs (approximately 18,000 to 19,000 positions) in accordance with the percentage of votes that the governing parties had in parliament, allotted according to party-colours and acronyms. This is what characterised the so-called negotiated governability.

Today, this system of institutional stability is in crisis. In the first place, we have an executive without majority legislative support; a president without parties – at least visible ones – in the parliamentary sphere. Moreover, in Bolivia there is an open bifurcation of the political system; on the one hand, decisions made in parliament, and, on the other hand, decisions made through the mobilisations of unions, communities, civic committees and social movements.

This means that, at present, Bolivia has a bifurcated political field. Politics is less-and-less carried out through parties, and politics is carried out outside of them by business-corporations, civic committees, unions, trade-associations and neighbourhood-councils, which are also structures of political action. This is true to such an extent that parliament is not currently even discussing its own agenda: the agenda of the Constituent Assembly, of the referendum and of the new Hydrocarbons-Law is dictated by the street, which speaks to the duality of political institutions in the country, fracturing the model of democracy and of negotiated governability that had lent stability to the Bolivian state over the last twenty years.

Lastly, there is the system of beliefs. All states are apparatuses of beliefs; politics is, above all, the administration of the dominant beliefs of a society. Such beliefs, the key ideas that characterised the country for 18 years, were modernity, the free market, foreign investment and liberal democracy, as synonyms for progress and society's prospects of modernisation. These ideas, which seduced society at every level, have been weakened; they do not inspire collective enthusiasm, and new key ideas are arising – nationalisation, decentralisation, autonomy, indigenous government, indigenous self-government, and so on. These are new key ideas, with growing social support, that are taking hold on the political stage and have weakened the key ideas that characterised neoliberalism over the last 18 years.

Therefore, we are facing a crisis of state-institutions, a crisis of the state's key ideas, a crisis in the balance of forces: a crisis of the state. This means that the current political crisis is not merely a problem of governance; this is not a problem of the president's administrative inefficiency, even though this is certainly present. The current crisis goes beyond bad presidential management and

parliamentary mediocrity. The institutional structure of the state is in crisis: its correlation of forces, its beliefs and its institutionality are being questioned, weakened, fractured and softened up by this kind of social and political phenomena.

Crisis of the long-term components of the state

As if this were not enough, we are not just witnessing a crisis of the 'neoliberal-patrimonial' state, which could be resolved with a moderate or radical post-neoliberal order, but are also simultaneously witnessing a crisis of the ensemble of the Bolivian state's long-term institutions and structures. It is well-known that all states have two levels of institutions and components: a long-term one that lasts for decades and centuries, made up of the structural components of the state-order, and that of its 'short-term' components, which are modified every two or three decades (nationalist state, neoliberal state, and so on). It turns out that now it is not only the short-term components of the state that are in question (its neoliberal nature), but also several 'long-term' components of the very nature of the republic. Therefore, we are witnessing a dual crisis or a superposition of two crises; a crisis of state concerning its short-term neoliberal components, and a crisis of state in terms of its long-term republican components. Let us examine this further.

The colonial fissure of the state

There are two central themes in the political struggle that are challenging the republican structure of the state. The first has to do with the role of the most influential socio-political actors in the country, basically the indigenous people. Currently, the most impressive social movements are Indian or are led by Indians; they are indigenous forces. This had not happened since 1899, during the Federal War. The Indians have never had as much possibility for exerting pressure and counterpower as we are seeing today. There is no doubt that they are the fundamental subjects currently challenging the state.

It is well known that the Bolivian republic's foundation left intact the colonial mechanisms that conferred prestige, property and power as a function of skin-colour, surname, language and lineage. The first republican constitution clearly distinguished between 'Bolivianness', conferred upon all those born under the territorial jurisdiction of the new republic, and 'citizens', who had to know how to read and write the dominant language (Spanish) and be free of bonds of servitude, ensuring that, right from the start, Indians lacked citizenship.

The different state-forms up to 1952 did not substantially modify this political *apartheid*. The *caudillo* state (1825–80) and the régime of so-called ‘censitary’ democracy (1880–1952), in both its liberal and its conservative periods, had modified the state’s political constitution many times; however, politico-cultural exclusion was maintained, both in state-legislation and in the people’s daily practices. Indeed, throughout this period, ethnic exclusion became the organising axis of the state’s cohesion.

The processes of democratisation and cultural homogenisation that began in the wake of the 1952 Revolution partly transformed the oligarchic state’s régime of ethnic and cultural exclusion. The universal vote extended the right of liberal political citizenship to millions of indigenous people, but it did so imposing a singular organisational framework for political rights – the liberal one – in a society with other traditional systems of political organisation and of selection of authorities, which were then swept aside, no longer considered to be efficient mechanisms for the exercise of political rights. Similarly, free public education allowed indigenous people, who had constituted the overwhelming majority of ‘illiterates’ excluded from the body of state-knowledge, to gain greater access to this knowledge. However, the acquisition of legitimate cultural knowledge was limited to the mandatory learning of a foreign language, Spanish, and of cultural norms produced and monopolised by the *mestizo*-urban communities, once again setting in motion the mechanisms of ethnic exclusion, although now in a reformed and euphemistic fashion. Thus, from 1952 to 1976, the sixty to sixty-five percent of the Bolivian population that spoke an indigenous language as their mother-tongue could only exercise their citizenship-rights in a foreign language, since official education, the university-system, and relations with public administration, services, and so on, could only be conducted in Spanish, and not in Quechua or Aymara.

180 years of republican life – despite clear improvements in terms of achieving equal individual rights – have re-ethnicised domination, producing a field of competition for the acquisition of legitimate ethnicity (ethnic capital), which conditions the processes of social mobility and class-formation.

In Bolivia, it is very much evident that, despite the profound process of cultural *mestizaje* (*mestizo*-isation), a national community has not yet been realised. There are at least thirty regional languages and/or dialects, there are two languages that are the mother tongue of 37 percent of the population (Aymara and Quechua), and close to 62 percent identify themselves as belonging to an indigenous people.²¹ And, to the extent that every language is a worldview, this linguistic diversity is also cultural and symbolic diversity. If we add to this that

21. INE 2002.

there are cultural and national identities older than the republic, and that, even today, they demand political sovereignty over seized territories (as in the case of the Aymaras), it is very clear that Bolivia is, at heart, a coexistence of various overlapping or somewhat combined regional nationalities and cultures. However, and despite this, the state is monoethnic and monocultural in terms of the Spanish-speaking Bolivian cultural identity. This implies that only with the Spanish language can people obtain rights and possibilities of social mobility within the country's various power-structures – economic, political, judicial and military, as well as cultural ones.

In Bolivia, there are at least fifty historico-cultural communities with different characteristics and hierarchical positions. The majority of these cultural communities are located in the eastern region of the country, and demographically they range from a few dozen families to almost a hundred thousand people. The two largest indigenous historico-cultural communities are located in the western part of the country: the Quechua and Aymara speakers, who number more than five million. The Aymaras number a little over two and a half million people, and they have all the elements of a highly cohesive and politicised ethnic identity. Unlike the other indigenous identities, the Aymara identity has for decades produced cultural élites able to create discursive structures strong enough to reinvent an autonomous history that anchors the pursuit of an autonomous future in the past, a system of mass union-mobilisation around these political beliefs, and recently, a leadership able to confer a visible body-politic to ethnicity. Lastly, there is the dominant Bolivian cultural identity, the outcome of 180 years of republican life, which, though it initially arose as a state-created political artifice, now has a set of historico-cultural and popular milestones that make it consistently and predominantly urban.

However, the majority of these cultural communities' cognitive references have never been integrated into the establishment of the legitimate state-symbolic and organisational world, because the structures of social power are under the prevalent monopoly of the Bolivian ethnic identity. This is why we can say that the republican state is a monoethnic or monocultural state, and, in this sense, an exclusive and racist one.

During the life of the republic, this has led to several periods of indigenous mobilisation, both for partial claims and for political power, whether under the form of co-government or self-government.

Since 2000, we have, once again, been experiencing a period of indigenous insurgency, aimed at contesting the state-leadership and society's politico-cultural hegemony. This new period of indigenous mobilisation has its roots in the 1970s, with the emergence of the Indianist-Katarist movement in intellectual circles and agrarian unions. The indigenous movement first took shape in the

highlands, which gained presence and voice in the 1970s and 1980s; then the indigenous people in the lowlands brought to light the mechanisms of exclusion of scores of towns whose rights society had neglected; and, in the mid-1990s, the coca-farmers became the sector that devoted most effort to resisting policies to eradicate the coca-leaf.

But April 2000 would mark a turning point in social movements' – especially indigenous ones' – demands and capacity for socio-political mobilisation. Articulated around securing their basic needs and defending community-managed territorial resources, small, local territorial and non-territorial organisational structures – based on place of residence, on the control of goods such as land and water, on occupational and trade-activity, or simply on friendship – created networks of collective mobilisation that have given new life to new social movements. This is the case of the *Coordinadora del Agua y la Vida* ('Coalition in Defence of Water and Life'), the *Sin Tierra* ('Landless Peasants'), the *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas de Qullasuyu* ('Qullasuyu National Council of Ayllus and Markas', CONAMAQ), as well as the revitalisation of old organisations, such as the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* ('United Confederation of Peasant-Workers' Unions of Bolivia', CSUTCB), the *Confederación de Colonizadores* ('Confederation of Colonist-Farmers'), the coca-farmers, the *Coordinadora de Pueblos Étnicos de Santa Cruz* ('Santa Cruz Coalition of Ethnic Peoples', CPESC), the neighbourhood-councils, and others.

The historical importance of these social movements lies in their capacity to reconstruct the social fabric and their autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state, in addition to the fact that they are radically redefining what is understood as political action and democracy. In exclusively organisational terms, the virtue of these social movements lies in the fact that they have created flexible and fundamentally territorially-rooted mechanisms of participation, adherence and collective affiliation at the regional level, which are well-suited to the new hybrid and porous constitution of social classes and identities in Bolivia.

While the old labour-movement had workplace-based union-cohesion at its core, around which other urban-trade organisational forms were articulated, the current social movements (CSUTCB, *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* ('Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia', CIDOB), colonist-farmers, CPESC, irrigation-farmers, coca-farmers) are organised around the indigenous-*campesino* community in rural areas and neighbourhood-communities in urban areas, while the labour-unions (such as rural teachers), trade-associations (such as transport-workers and local merchants), students, and others gather around these. Here, the urban and rural *campesino* and neighbourhood indigenous communities, which represent the cells of a different kind of society, are the organising axis providing the backbone for other social groups and other

local modes of combination, influenced by indigenous-*campesino* economic and cultural activity. With their collective action, more than a social movement, they make a societal movement,²² since it is an entire society that moves through time.

The potential for such a range of plural organisations and social subjects to mobilise must be guaranteed by means of being selective about objectives, allowing diverse collective wills to concentrate around certain specific demands. This has required shifting demands from the issue of direct wages, specific to the old labour-movement, and recasting them in terms of a politics of vital needs (water, territory, public services and resources, hydrocarbons, education), which concern multiple demographic sectors of the subaltern population, and which, depending on the social location of subjects, can be read both as an element of indirect wages (for the waged) and as the material basis for reproduction (residents, youth) or the condensation of an identity's historico-cultural legacy (the indigenous).

But the current indigenous social movements are not only a matter of protest and making demands; above all, they are structures of political action. They are political because the subjects to which the mobilising demands are addressed are, first and foremost, the state (in terms of overturning the Water-Law, annulling contracts for privatisation, suspending the forced eradication of coca, indigenous territoriality, calling a Constituent Assembly and nationalising hydrocarbons) and the system of supra-state institutions that determine public policy (such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and foreign investors). Indeed, the very affirmation of a politics of (highland and lowland) indigenous identity is made in opposition to the state-institutional system, which has throughout the republican period racialised the domination and exclusion of the indigenous people.

However, among the many movements, there are also those that are geared toward power. To the extent that the mobilisations in recent years have been aimed at highlighting structural grievances of political exclusion and the inequitable distribution of wealth, social movements have revived the traditional local arenas of deliberation, management and control (assemblies, *cabildos*), projecting them regionally as non-institutional systems of participation and public control that have paralysed – and, in some cases, intermittently broken up – the institutional framework of the state in several regions of the country (the northern *altiplano*, Chapare, the city of Cochabamba), resulting in the coexistence of two political camps with normative competencies, at times hybrid and at others in direct confrontation. Similarly, based on their experiences with the practical

22. Tapia 2002c.

exercise of rights, social movements have begun to project these successful experiences of deliberation and management of rights to the broad national scale, with the formulation of a rational plan of 'societal leadership'.²³ While doing away with the historical fatalism with which the neoliberal project has been legitimised over the last twenty years, this project offers an alternative model of state- and economic reform that not only proposes transforming the state of affairs of recent decades, but also to dismantle the structures of colonialism maintained throughout the history of the republic.

We can say, therefore, that social and societal movements have transformed several aspects of the political realm: modifying the legitimate space where politics can take place; redesigning the socio-economic and ethnic condition of political actors; innovating with novel social techniques of engaging in politics; and altering the objectives and meanings of politics, not only with respect to its neoliberal features, but fundamentally with respect to its republican character, setting out to transform the current monocultural state into a multinational state and multinational political institutionality.

The spatial fissure of the state

The second axis of the state's structural fracture is related to the transfer of the state's economic and political centres of decision-making, from one region (the northwest) to another (the east).

According to Zavaleta, territory is the depth of a people: 'only blood is as important as territory', and even more so if, as is the case in Bolivia, our constitutive agrarian period and the birth of the republic were determined according to the logic of space, rather than the logic of society. This means that, unlike those societies whose collective eagerness for cohesion has led to the production of territory, here we are the offspring of our space, without which we would not be who we are today.

It was also Zavaleta who distinguished between inherent territories and adjacent ones. The former are those that determine the destiny and the character of a nation, while the latter only complement this central core, and state-formation occurs precisely because of the state's capacity to territorially validate these inherent spaces. Therefore, the density of a nation, or the ways in which it sees itself and defines its objectives, is measured by the way it socially internalises space as the material basis for its collective fulfilment. Thus, when a crisis of state as in Bolivia currently, there is also a structural tension in the way in

23. Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989.

which society conceives of its territoriality and in the way in which it thinks of itself as a modern political community – as a nation.

The state does not manifest itself with the same intensity everywhere; it also has essential and complementary zones. The former are the politico-geographical axes of the state's sovereignty, while the latter are the areas to which this sovereignty extends. These politico-geographical axes are not fixed or eternal; they are altered as a function of the spatial movements of the economy's organising foundations and the centres that enable a country's politico-cultural reform. Thus, for example, the transfer of the seat of government from Sucre to La Paz in the late nineteenth century meant the shift of the politico-cultural centre of the state from Sucre-Potosí, with its silver-economy and its judicial intelligentsia, to the La Paz-Oruro-Cochabamba centre, with its new tin-mining and manufacture, Aymara-Indians as political subjects, and liberal lawyers, who sought a vision of the country above and beyond its legal structures.

Today, we are, once again, witnessing a questioning of the geographical centrality of power, which does not necessarily mean a change in the seat of government, but rather differing positions as regards what spatial-economic dynamic will structure the power-bloc and worldview encompassed by the state. Santa Cruz, with its agro-industrial vitality, and Tarija, with its gas-reserves, are striving to become the driving force of the national economy in the coming decades, while the situation of Oruro, with its declining mining economy, and La Paz, which is unable to establish a new technological pattern suited to the new productive requirements of the global economy, will likely result in the transfer of the state's economic centre from the west to the east.

However, the constitution of the politico-spatial axes of the state does not only depend on the economic might of local geographies, as the state is not a company whose centres are determined by the economic profitability they contribute to the whole. From Max Weber, we know that the state is an implied balance of political forces, a bearer of legitimacy and hegemony; that is, a political relation of legitimate domination that enables an illusory political community among rulers and the ruled. Economic leadership can help, and, indeed, over the long term, it provides the material support for legitimacy and political domination. But economic might is not immediately politico-cultural might, and spatial power-shifts may be curtailed due to a lack of moral and intellectual reform among the economically ascendant élite. Likewise, a political hegemony built on a stagnating or declining economy may be possible, although such hegemony can only be sustained if it is ultimately accompanied by economic reform and economic vitality.

Indeed, this would seem to characterise the deformed hegemonies prevalent in the current context of the country's polarisation along ethnic and regional-classist lines. On the one hand, there is a business-economy in the stagnating

west, with business-groups that have renounced all positions of political leadership, amidst a plebeian-indigenous, politico-cultural leadership whose basis is a traditional urban-*campesino* economy in crisis. On the other hand, there is a modern economic leadership in the east, but with regionally limited political power, without much possibility of one pole extending its geographical and class-ambit over the spatiality articulated by other. Of course, it is very unlikely that the liberal and free-enterprise discourse espoused by the Santa Cruz business-élites will captivate the Andean masses, who counted on this type of modernity for ten years, receiving only a decrease in their wages and in their expectations of social mobility. An autonomist discourse that is not accompanied by a form of post-neoliberalism lacks the potential to seduce, and, therefore, to be hegemonic, in the west. But in turn, popular neo-statism, especially indigenous leadership, will be unlikely to captivate the rising middle-class and business-groups benefiting from the free market and that, in both east and west, have been secularly educated in the subservient subalternity of the Indians.

However, there is a double paradox in all this. On the one hand, the social bloc that rises up and defends the strength of a modern economy has a non-modern, seigneurial interpretation of state-territoriality, and thus lacks the cultural and symbolic strength to form a national leadership. On the other hand, those who are grounded in the precariousness of the traditional, urban-*campesino* economy do understand space in national terms, but they lack the material basis with which to lead the economy, as modern states are not built upon the small, domestic, family-based economy.

The thing is that business-groups, at all times and in every region, despite all their technical modernisms, have never stopped seeing power and territory in a patrimonial fashion; at first as a privilege of lineage, and then as a continuation of the seigneurial logic of the *hacienda*. Independently of the globalisation of their economic activities and its lifestyles, the Santa Cruz business-groups understand space regionally, and they have rejected a socially inclusive understanding of the national territory. Thus, in extreme circumstances, they may consider breaking Bolivia's territorial unity in order to ensure the spatial protection of their interests, as they do not see state-territoriality as a spatiality that is inherent to their destiny, but rather just as a contingency of the essentiality of the *hacienda*. In this sense, this vision of the state's spatial tie is premodern, seigneurial, and similar to that of the nineteenth-century Andean élites, who, according to Zavaleta, cared more about the state of the statue of the Virgin of Copacabana than they did about the loss of the country's coastline.

In contrast, for the indigenous-plebeian movement, the national logic of the state-space is incorporated into its intellectual horizon; it is the legacy of an agrarian logic of 'multiple ecological layers'. Thus Indians see power not only

where there is an indigenous majority, but in the entire country (by means of electoral triumph, in the moderate version, with a Constituent Assembly, or else by means of the establishment of the *Qullasuyu*, in the radical version), as their spatial pretensions extend to the full extent of the state, and even further at times, as is the case with the Aymaras. There is, then, a modern incorporation of the state's geography, although it is clear that the technico-economic basis for this nationalising drive could be considered 'premodern'.

These limits and tensions in the current struggle for power have a territorial equivalent in the form of the debate about an autonomous state.

Politico-administrative decentralisation and autonomy

In Bolivia, the struggle or the demand for autonomy and/or federalism goes back to the debates in the 1860s over the different proposals for federalism. These discussions were taken up again in 1899, when the economically ascendant élites from La Paz, enjoying greater discursive capacity politically and culturally, and with support from more active social sectors (the Aymaras and the artisans), had reconfigured the context of political forces and were seeking to move the seat of government from Sucre to La Paz in the name of federalism. This transfer of the seat of government from Sucre to La Paz actually signified a shift away from the Potosí-Sucre economic centre, tied to silver-mining and the cultural hegemony of intellectual groups associated with the judiciary, toward the economy of the north, tied to tin-mining, which was beginning to displace silver-mining; toward manufacturing in Cochabamba, Oruro and La Paz; and toward a more active role for the urbanised liberal intellectuals, who were not closely tied to the state-bureaucratic apparatus, as had been the case in Sucre. This means that the move of the seat of government from Sucre to La Paz was a shift of the centres of economics, politics and culture from the south toward the north.

This issue of what is federal and what is autonomous re-emerged intellectually in Santa Cruz at the beginning of the twentieth century with the *Manifiesto de la Sociedad Geográfica* ('Geographical Society Manifesto'), which criticised the state for abandoning the regions of the east and proposed a model of comprehensive economic development and a model of political development with a strong autonomous role for regional self-governments. The issue of regional governments emerged once again in 1957, when oil-royalties were debated: following several incidents and conflicts, a percentage of oil-royalties were distributed to each department, as continues to be the case today.

The issue of autonomy and decentralisation was taken up again by the civic committees when democracy returned in 1982 and 1984. At that time, it was

not only Santa Cruz that was demanding decentralisation, but also other departments such as Cochabamba, Sucre and Potosí. This rise in the demand for departmental decentralisation was neutralised with the application of the Law of Popular Participation, which imposed a municipality-level decentralisation that is not political, but administrative.

The Law of Popular Participation, which decentralised the administration of the state according to municipality, along with a greater integration of regional élites – especially those from Santa Cruz – and the centralist state-structure by means of the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* ('Revolutionary Nationalist Movement', MNR), *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* ('Revolutionary-Left Movement', MIR) and *Acción Democrática Nacionalista* ('Nationalist Democratic Action', ADN) parties, put an end to the decentralising drive of the 1980s and brought the Santa Cruz business-élites to key positions of power in the state-structure, accompanying the free-market reforms enacted throughout the neo-liberal phase.

However, the crisis of state that began five years ago has weakened the (party-based and ideological) neoliberal hegemony established in 1985 and forced its retreat. But this weakening has left the issue of a new national leadership unresolved. On one hand, the conservative ideas of the established order have become entrenched and strengthened in eastern and southern regions of the country (Santa Cruz, Beni, Tarija), while reformist and progressive ideas have made progress and obtained leadership in its western regions. Yet none of these political projects have been able to spread or branch out as national projects, resulting in a regionalisation of leaderships.

In this respect, the current revitalisation of the demand for autonomy in Santa Cruz, led by the traditional parties (MNR, MIR and ADN) and the regional business-corporations – the *Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente* ('Agrarian Chamber of the East', CAO) and the *Cámara de Industria, Comercio, Servicios y Turismo de Santa Cruz* ('Santa Cruz Chamber of Industry, Commerce, Services and Tourism', CAINCO) – is a clear regional business-rebellion against the popular-indigenous demands and drives for economic and political transformation. It is a bourgeois revolt against the processes of change advanced by the social movements. It consists of a series of demonstrations, mobilisations and direct actions led by regional business-groups, who seek to preserve the economic order and to establish a regional political shield to protect their interests, which are in retreat in the rest of the country. What is remarkable is that this rallying call finds social acceptance – regional support from working and popular sectors – allowing us to speak of the active presence of a hegemony, of a business-leadership in the region.

Unlike what occurs in regions of the west, where the popular and indigenous social movements have constructed a widespread common sense that explains social deprivation, the lack of jobs, discrimination and the crisis as results of the 'neoliberal model', in the east, the same problems that affect subaltern sectors are explained as a result of 'centralism', which is an ideology and worldview sanctioned by the business-élites. This is how they sustain their leadership and their social base. This is, certainly, related to the weakness of the popular social fabric in Santa Cruz, the popular sectors' lack of political autonomy, and so on, which allow the demands and frustrations of the various popular urban sectors, and especially of the young Andean emigrants, to be articulated, one-by-one, around the promises made by the business-élites.

This rebellion of the regional élites against the government is fundamentally related to the fact that, over the sixteen months since October 2003, the Santa Cruz business-élites have lost control over a significant part of their means of exerting political power, which they had administered uninterrupted for 19 years. Since 1985, independently of the MNR, ADN and MIR governments, the Santa Cruz élites held ministerial positions key for determining the country's economic policies; they were co-opted into the higher tiers of the main parties of government and controlled areas of decision-making in the parliament. This allowed them to directly influence the determination of public policies that favoured their advancement as a modern business-fraction. Over the last thirty years, and with particular emphasis in the last fifteen, the Santa Cruz bourgeoisie has done what all dominant business-classes have done throughout the republic's history: they have used their political power to broaden, extend and protect their sectorial economic capitalisation.

Their displacement from the circles of power first began with the resignation of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who had created a series of ties of loyalty and support with the Santa Cruz business-groups, maintained to the very last minute when the former president left for his 'self-imposed exile' in October 2003. The second moment of this loss of power came with the political weakening of the parties in which these Santa Cruz business-groups controlled structures of influence and decision-making (the MNR and MIR); the third moment of this loss of personal control over the apparatuses of governmental power was when President Carlos Mesa chose intellectual and civic élites detached from the regional economic élites as the Santa Cruz representatives he appointed to ministries. And the final moment of this loss of the means of governmental power came with the results of the municipal elections, which meant the weakening of the parties that had traditionally been at the centre of national politics (the MNR, MIR and ADN) and their near-exclusion from the spheres of political

decision-making. From that moment, it was just a matter of time before an offensive by business, through corporatist means – the last redoubt of their interests being the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz and business-organisations – in order to restore their positions in a power-framework that had detached itself from their direct and personal management.

The increase in the price of diesel in December 2004 was the pretence that allowed them to mobilise, channel and lead social unrest to a defence of Santa Cruz business-interests, which are, certainly, those that most benefit from state-subsidies for this fuel. The current regional business-uprising is, therefore, an open struggle for state-power, for control of all or a substantial part (such as land-issues, the taxation-régime and the economic model) of the mechanisms for making decisions on the management of public resources. The fact that this is a regional business-leadership, and that the armed forces have, for the time being, a neutral or distant attitude with respect to business-demands (as a result of the separatist overtones sometimes used by civic leaders), limits the possibility of a total change in the power-structure in their favour, although their strength may force a gradual transition returning the influence they had prior to October.

Because of the characteristics of this struggle for governmental power, because of what these business-sectors have defended and seek to defend, and because of the way in which they accumulated economic power in recent years, this struggle also seeks to change the direction – or put a stop to – the set of political and economic reforms resulting from popular-indigenous pressure in the west, since the continuation of these reforms could directly affect the mechanisms of business's economic power (by means of the Constituent Assembly, which would change the system of land-ownership; the nationalisation of hydrocarbons, which would put an end to the hope for regionalised oil-royalties; and so on). Thus, this struggle for power is also a struggle resisting the continuation of the so-called 'October Agenda', resulting from the urban-rural rebellion of October 2003.

Nonetheless, business's struggle for control over the decision-making structures of political power does not take the form of a general 'national' struggle for total control of the state, which would require the Santa Cruz business-groups to advance a series of proposals, to call upon the rest of the country to mobilise, to articulate its interests together with other social forces that are not exclusively regional sectors from the east. This, for the élites, is impossible, as the type of country that they champion and defend (based on the free market, foreign investment, racism, and so on) was defeated throughout the west in October 2003, and it is a tired ideology in retreat, at least temporarily. Thus, the Santa Cruz leadership has committed to a regionalisation of their political struggle by means of the demand for autonomy.

In a strict sense, the Santa Cruz business-groups' demand for autonomy appears, then, as a defensive struggle, retreating into its region of prime influence (Santa Cruz), and, in the process, abandoning the struggle for a national hegemony that they deem impossible. The struggle for autonomy in Santa Cruz is, therefore, a political step backward with respect to what Santa Cruz élites previously controlled ('national' state-apparatuses), and establishes regional limits for a bourgeoisie that does not dare try to lead the country politically, economically or culturally, instead retreating into its regional domain to vie for local control of the gas-surplus, shared with the oil-companies. Autonomy for Santa Cruz has become the main banner of the business-groups' demands. It is, therefore, a struggle for political power, but in its segmented, regionalised, partial dimension, and the materialisation of their withdrawal from the dispute for overall, 'national' control of the country. Their victory, should they secure it, will not resolve their lack of national hegemony and leadership and of a broad vision shared by the majority of society; it will radicalise the regionalisation of the class-struggle, of political leaderships and of plans for the country, increasing the separatist tendencies that have always lurked in the political behaviour of social subjects from east and west.

Still, despite this local restriction to its dispute for political power, the Santa Cruz bourgeoisie's demands and the oil-companies that support them are directly challenging not only a government, but the state-structure, at its constitutional base, and, above all, the control of resources that are essential for any national economic development-strategy in the coming decades – namely, land and hydrocarbons. It is, therefore, a reactionary insurgency that calls the viability of the state into question, and most dangerously, casts doubt upon the material economic basis for any process of reform or of progressive transformation that popular and indigenous sectors of the country may wish to advance.

It is clear, then, that the Santa Cruz Civic Committee's current demand for autonomy, though it does fulfil a democratising function, is, above all, a pretence with which the élite can suppress projects of economic and political reform rolling back neoliberalism. It turns out, then, that part of the sectors politically defeated in October have begun to reconstitute themselves around the Santa Cruz agenda – we are speaking about the MNR, the MIR and the ADN, who see Santa Cruz and its regional movement as a territory from which they can begin to once again advance their proposals and political leadership.

The current debate about whether the referendum on autonomy or the election of the members of a Constituent Assembly should come first is not a false debate; it is a debate in which the collective interests of power position themselves. The political and economic forces that want autonomy first seek to pose autonomy at the departmental level in order to indefinitely postpone the

Constituent Assembly, because they still feel like an electoral minority; they do not think that they could play a leading role as they have in all prior national elections, even more so when the parties that had enabled them to convert the demographic minority into a political majority (the ADN, MIR and MNR) are undergoing a process of structural weakening. Those that seek the Constituent Assembly, in contrast, want to hold it before or at the same time as the referendum on autonomy, precisely in order to force this eastern power-bloc to participate in the Assembly, believing that the social, popular and indigenous blocs will have a greater presence and a majority, thus being able to advance changes in the economic and property-systems and the régime of social rights that could benefit previously-excluded sectors.

Overall, at play in the debate over autonomy are the strategies positioning each of the country's social and political forces, and it is thus important, when we engage in a contextual interpretation of this issue, to understand the background to the different arguments used by the different actors in search of legitimacy. In a strict sense, the stakes in the autonomy-agenda are the political power of groups, classes and social factions.

Polarised political terrain and catastrophic equilibrium

In this context of a dual crisis of state – namely, a crisis of the neoliberal state and a crisis of the Bolivian state's monocultural and centralist republican components – there is a growing social and political polarisation underway, understood as a clash between opposing projects coming from two different ways of understanding life, the economy and the future.

On one hand, we can identify a liberal, neoconservative project, which, in economic terms, continues to defend an open, globalised economy with foreign investment and weak state-intervention. The other pole defends an economy more centred around the domestic market, with a stronger role for a 'producer-state', which tries to restore the economic dynamics of traditional sectors in the countryside, of communities, and of the family-based, micro-enterprise urban world.

Politically, the former is a project that suggests a partisan or business-corporatist understanding of politics, with traditional forms of leadership coming from the old political élites. The latter suggests a type of union-communitarianism, a vindication of multiculturalism and the presence of the indigenous in decision-making, and is led mainly by indigenous leaders.

The former presents a class-based confrontation, while the latter presents an ethnic confrontation, and there is a third tendency that presents a regional confrontation. On one hand, these neoconservative forces – which is no mere epi-

thet, to the extent that they do hope to preserve the way things are, with some modifications – though they are present throughout the country, have their dominant strength in parts of the country's east. Meanwhile, the reformist forces have their greatest capacity for mobilisation, both in terms of elections and collective action, in the valley-regions and the *altiplano*. Thus, Bolivia is simultaneously undergoing a classist, ethnic and regional polarisation.

Altogether, we are witnessing a context of widespread conflict over the redistribution of state-power in Bolivia, between sectors that have traditionally held power and new sectors, previously excluded from the country's decision-making structures, who now seek to take charge of the administration of the state. But the characteristic of this battle for power is that neither of the blocs has the capacity to prevail over the other.

We thus have polarities that run across regions, classes and ethnic identities, but neither pole or power-bloc has sufficient capacity either to prevail over or seduce the other; in Gramscian terms, we are seeing a 'catastrophic equilibrium'. A catastrophic equilibrium arises when there is no capacity for a complete hegemony, but rather an unresolved dispute for hegemony between two proto-hegemonies, and this creates processes of constant, low-intensity confrontation and conflicts – a mutual erosion that prevents either of them from extending their leadership across the rest of society.

Hence, the most reasonable option is to conclude that the only way to resolve this 'equilibrium' is by way of a truce or, what amounts to the same thing, a negotiated redistribution of state-power, which would necessarily lead to an extension of rights to the most excluded sectors and to a negotiated redistribution of economic opportunities in society.

Indianism and Marxism: The Disparity between Two Revolutionary Rationales¹

In Bolivia, the old Marxism is neither politically nor intellectually relevant, and critical Marxism, which comes from a new intellectual generation, has only limited influence and still-narrow circles of production. In contrast, Indianism has, little-by-little, established itself as a narrative of resistance that has recently been put forward as an authentic possibility for power.

Over the last hundred years, five main rebellious and emancipatory ideologies or 'worldviews' have been developed in Bolivia. The first of these narratives of social emancipation was anarchism, which was able to articulate the experiences and demands of urban sectors of the workforce tied to small-scale artisanal and waged labour and to trade. With a presence in some spheres of urban labour since the late nineteenth century, it was most influential in the 1930s and 1940s, when it was able to structure federations of horizontally organised union-associations around an agenda based on achieving labour-rights and the autonomous development of a libertarian culture amongst its members.

Another ideology rooted in the experiences of previous centuries is what we can call 'resistance-Indianism', which arose following the defeat of the uprising and indigenous government led by Pablo Zárate Willka and Juan Lero in 1899. When this programme for national-indigenous power was suppressed, the ethnic movement – by defending community-lands and access to the education-system – adopted a position that

1. Text excerpted from García Linera 2005b.

favoured renewing its pact of subalternity with the state. Nourished by an oral culture of resistance, the predominantly Aymara indigenous movement combined, in a fragmented fashion, negotiations by its native authorities and local rebellion. This was replaced in the middle of the last century, with revolutionary nationalism becoming the communities' explanatory worldview.

Revolutionary nationalism and primitive Marxism were two political narratives that simultaneously emerged with great strength following the Chaco War, among relatively similar sectors (the educated middle-classes), with similar proposals (economic modernisation and the construction of the national state), in opposition to the same adversary – the old oligarchic and élitist régime.

Unlike this nascent Marxism, for which the question of power was a rhetorical one whose answer was sought through loyalty to the canonical texts, revolutionary nationalism took the shape, right from the start, of an ideology with a clear will to power, which was to be resolved in a practical fashion. It is not by chance that this thinking came close to the position of officers in the army – that institution key to the definition of state-power – and that several of its proponents, such as Víctor Paz Estenssoro, participated in the short-lived progressive military administrations that eroded the conservative political hegemony of the period. Nor is it by chance that, over time, the revolutionary nationalists purposely combined uprisings (1949) with *coups d'état* (1952) and electoral participation, demonstrating clear aspirations for power.

With the leadership of the 1952 Revolution secured through practical deeds and proposals, the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* ('Revolutionary Nationalist Movement', MNR) converted its party-programme into an entire worldview advanced by the state, producing a moral and intellectual reform that enjoyed political and cultural hegemony in all of Bolivian society for thirty-five years, independently of whether the successive governments were civilian or military.

Primitive Marxism

Though Marxist thought was present since the 1920s as a result of the activity of isolated intellectuals such as Tristán Marof,² Marxism as a political culture that contested ideological hegemony gathered strength in the 1940s, as a result of the activity of the *Partido de Izquierda Revolucionaria* ('Revolutionary-Left Party', PIR), the *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* ('Revolutionary Workers' Party', POR) and the intellectual production of their leaders (Guillermo Lora, José Aguirre Gainsborg, José Antonio Arze, Arturo Urquidi, and so on).

2. Marof 1926.

The rise of Marxism and its reception in the social sphere were marked by two constitutive processes. The first lay in an ideological production directly linked to political struggle, which did away with the lure of a 'textbook-Marxism'. The main intellectuals that subscribed to this current of thought engaged in political activism, whether through parliamentary struggle or in organising the masses, which influenced both the theoretical limitations of the period's intellectual production – more faithful to a repetition of the simple outlines of Soviet economic and philosophical manuals – and the constant combination of their reflection with political events actually occurring in society.

The other noteworthy aspect of this rise of Marxism is its reception, and that of revolutionary nationalism itself, among working people, which followed a change in the class-composition of the economically most important cores of the Bolivian mining and industrial proletariat, in the midst of a shift from the 'artisanal manufacturing labourer' to the 'skilled worker in large company'. This means that Marxism took root in the *locus* of labour just at the moment of the shift away from the centrality of individual work-knowledge and traditional master-craftsmanship characterising productive activity in the shops and industries; amidst a predominantly technical industrial framework; and amidst a tiered division of labour among industrial workers in the tin-mining companies and the mainly urban textile-factories.³

It was, therefore, a proletariat that internalised the technical rationality of capitalist modernisation based on the large company, and that was subjectively predisposed to a rationality grounded in a faith in technology as the principal productive force and in the country's occupational homogenisation and industrial modernisation. It was undoubtedly a rise of a type of proletariat that was internalising the real subsumption of labour to capital as a mass prejudice,⁴ and it was in this new proletarian subjectivity, occupying the centre of the country's fundamental economic activities, that Marxism was able to take root for decades with a discourse based on a modernising rationalisation of society.

Marxism in this first period was, without a doubt, an ideology of the country's industrial modernisation in economic terms and of the consolidation of the national state in political terms. Ultimately, the entire revolutionary programme of the various different Marxisms from that time up to the 1980s had similar objectives, even when it went under different names: the POR's 'proletarian' revolution, the Bolivian Communist Party's 'democratic bourgeois revolution in transition to socialism', the 'national liberation' of the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* ('National-Liberation Army', ELN), and the 'socialist liberation' of the *Partido Socialista 1* ('Socialist Party 1', PS1). They all sought the relentless

3. García Linera 2000d.

4. Zavaleta 1986a.

development of labour's capitalist modernity; a replacement of 'traditional' production-relations, especially in the *campesino* community, which had to become 'collectivised' or 'workerised'; cultural homogenisation, in order to consolidate the state; and the increasing nationalisation of productive activities as the basis for a planned economy and for nation- and state-wide societal cohesion.

Ultimately, this primitive Marxism, because of its origins and its objectives, was a kind of radicalised revolutionary nationalism; thus it is no strange thing that the activists and Marxist cadres from the factories and the mines, especially the 'PORists' and the 'PIRists', quickly joined the victorious party in April 1952; nor is it strange that the proletarian masses influenced by these Marxist parties, when it came down to it, acted upon MNR ideological commands at decisive political moments. Thus, while they might support the Trotskyist transitional plan in the miners' and factory-workers' conventions, they supported a MNR ideology during presidential elections and in their political behaviour. Ultimately, what distinguished Marxists from nationalists was not so much their modernising, nationalising and homogenising discourse as it was the latter's will for power in order to carry out their promises.

Still, Marxism came to form a political culture widespread amongst working-class, salaried and student-sectors, based on the supremacy of the working-class identity over and above other identities and a belief in the progressive role of industrial technology in structuring the economy, in the central role of the state in owning and distributing wealth, in the cultural nationalisation of society based on these models, and in the historical and class-based 'inferiority' of the country's predominantly *campesino* communities.

This modernist and teleological narrative of history, generally adapted from economics- and philosophy-textbooks, created a cognitive block and an epistemological impossibility with respect to two realities – Bolivia's *campesino* and ethnic issue – that would become the point of departure for another emancipatory project, which, over time, would overcome even Marxist ideology itself.

Considered from the perspective of European capitalism, the birthplace of the proletariat that was supposed to make the revolution, and based on the dissolution of traditional *campesino* relations, the Marxist Left identified the agrarian reality as an indicator of the 'backwardness' that would have to give way to the 'progress' of industry, making it possible to think of emancipation. In this sense, agriculture appeared to be a liability for the subjects of the social revolution – the proletarians – who had to find the best way to 'drag along' the 'small land-holders'. Marxism's class-based interpretation of the agrarian reality was not based on formal and real subsumption, which would have revealed the exploitative conditions in this productive sector. Instead, it was based on the

framework – the prejudice – of the enclave, regarded in terms of ownership, such that self-employed workers were lumped together with the petty bourgeoisie, of questionable revolutionary loyalty due to their attachment to property.

In this framework, the community and its production-relations simply did not exist in the interpretative vision of this Marxism,⁵ not to mention any other social identity that was not strictly economic – in this case, that of the *campesino*. The cultural repertoires of the social classes, society's identity-based diversity and the existence of indigenous nations and peoples were absent from the literature and the strategies of the Left, with the exception of Osvaldo Sáenz,⁶ whose pioneering contribution was quickly silenced by the party-vulgate of social 'classes', which were not even identified by the structure of the relations of social production and reproduction, but solely in terms of property-relations. This produced a class-based reductionism of Bolivian social reality and a juridical and legalist reductionism of the configuration of the 'social classes'.⁷

According to this Marxism, there were neither Indians nor community, such that one of the most fruitful strains of classical-Marxist thought was rejected as a useful tool for interpreting Bolivian reality.⁸ Furthermore, this position forced the emerging political Indianism to assert itself by declaring ideological combat against both the nationalist tendencies and the Marxist ones, which dismissed and denied what Indianism upheld: that the agrarian community and the ethno-national issue were productive political forces that could function as forces for the regeneration of the social structure.

The Left's subsequent conversions on this issue in the late 1980s, when the country's national and communal diversity were 'discovered', were not only merely tokenistic – as the primitive Marxist Left had begun a steep intellectual decline and was becoming socially marginalised – but the issue was also addressed in the same superficial and instrumental way in which the centrality of the proletariat had been understood decades earlier.

Ultimately, a much more thorough understanding of the indigenous and community-issue would come from a new, critical Marxism that was not under the auspices of the state. From the end of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, drawing on the reflections advanced by René Zavaleta, this new Marxism sought to reconcile Indianism and Marxism in such a way

5. Notable exceptions, with a much more consistent Marxist analysis of the agrarian issue in Bolivia, can be found in Paz Ballivian 1979; and also in Echazú 1983.

6. Ovando Sáenz 1984.

7. Arze 1963; Lora 1980.

8. On community in Marx's thought, see Marx 1989b; 1989c; and Marx and Krader 1974.

that the processes of local knowledge-production could be combined with universal ones.⁹

Indianism

Universal suffrage, land-reform (which did away with the large *latifundio* estates in the *altiplano* and in the valleys) and free and universal education made the ideology of revolutionary nationalism a period-defining vision. This vision helped to shape a large part of the imaginary of the *campesino* communities, which found in this form of citizenship-formation, recognition and social mobility, a nationalising and culturally homogenising proposal that both deployed and diluted the ethno-national programme of resistance developed decades earlier. It was a time in which *campesino* discourse and ideology were becoming increasingly de-ethnicised, and it was a period of belief in the inclusion imagined in the state's project of *mestizo* cultural cohesion and of a transformation of the emerging *campesino* unions into the support-base for the nationalist state, both in its mass-democratic phase (1952–64) and in the early days of its dictatorial phase (1964–74).

The material sustenance for this period of the state's national hegemony was the growing social differentiation in the countryside, enabling mechanisms of internal mobility by means of the markets and the broadening market-base in the rural economy. The increasing flow of people away from the land, which led to the rapid growth of the large and medium-sized cities and the flexibility of the urban labour-market, encouraged a belief in successful mobility from the country to the cities, in which access to stable salaried labour and higher education provided means of social mobility.

The first failures of this project of economic modernisation and of the nationalisation of society began to manifest themselves in the 1970s, when ethnicity, in the form of surname, language and skin-colour, was revamped by the dominant élites as one more mechanism of selection for social mobility. This was a renewal of the old colonial logic of the enclave and of class-destructuring, which, along with social networks and economic means, were considered to be the principal means of upward and downward social mobility.

This, along with the limited modern labour-market, unable to absorb the increasing immigration, opened up increasing space for the resurgence of a new Indianist worldview, which had gone through various periods in the preceding

9. Tapia 2002c; Prada 2004; García Linera, Quispe, Gutiérrez, Prada and Tapia 2001; García Linera, Tapia and Prada, 2004.

34 years: formation, state co-optation, and its transformation into a strategy for power.

The development of Katarist Indianism

The first period was that of the development of Katarist Indianism as a discursive, political and cultural construction that created cultural borders as a form of making social exclusions and hierarchies visible. At first, Katarist Indianism arose as a political discourse that started to systematically resignify history, language and culture. In some cases, this discursive formation revised colonial and republican history to show the injustices, usurpations and discriminations to which indigenous peoples have been subjected in the management of society's wealth and power. In other cases, it condemned the obstacles to the processes of citizenship-formation and social mobility that had been promised by the nationalist *mestizo* project that began in 1952. In both of these currents, which were complementary, there was a discourse that denounced and made demands that, based on the revision of history, condemned the impossibility of fulfilling the promises of citizenship, *mestizaje* (*mestizo*-isation) and political and cultural equality with which nationalism had approached the indigenous *campesino* world since 1952.

This started to happen in the 1970s, when the centralist and productive model of the state was in full effect, and it was advanced with the activity of both a temporary and a permanent emigrant Aymara intelligentsia that gained access to higher education and urban life while still maintaining ties to rural communities and their systems of union-authority. In autonomous political circles and small cultural efforts (football, radio-programmes, talks in the parks, and so on),¹⁰ these intellectuals started to build networks amongst agrarian union-leaders for communication and for reinterpreting history, language and ethnicity, such as to begin to contest the legitimacy of the *campesino* discourses with which the state and the Left had appealed to the indigenous world.

The fundamental contribution of this period was the reinvention of *Indian-ness*, no longer as a stigma, but rather as a subject of emancipation, as a historic goal and as a political programme. It was an authentic discursive rebirth of the Indian – by means of the vindication and reinvention of their history, their past, their cultural practices, their hardships and their virtues – and it had a practical effect on the formation of self-identifications and organisational forms.

In the early days of this formative period, the work of Fausto Reinaga stood out; he was the most relevant and influential Indianist intellectual throughout

10. Hurtado 1985.

this historical period. His work aimed at constructing an identity; to the extent that, at least at first, there was no collective identity to construct, rather than declaring itself in contrast to and against other identities, the Indianism of that period differentiated itself not only from the 'other' *mestizo* and colonial Bolivia, but also from the workerist Left, strongly associated with the homogenising and modernist agenda of the nationalist state.

Right from the beginning, Indianism broke with Marxism and opposed it with the same vehemence with which it criticised another strong ideology of the time – Christianity – considering them both to be the principal ideological components of contemporary colonial domination. The attitude of the Left parties themselves contributed to this Indianist disqualification of Marxism as an emancipatory project, as they continued to subalternise the *campesino* with respect to the workers, were opposed to problematising the national-indigenous issue in the country, and, like the upper classes today, considered any reference to an emancipatory project based on the communal-potential of agrarian society to be a step away from 'modernity'.

Following this gaining of strength, however, in the late 1970s the Katarist-Indianist discourse split into four main currents. The first was that of the unions, which led to the formation of the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* ('United Confederation of Peasant-Workers' Unions of Bolivia', CSUTCB), which symbolically sealed the rupture between the *campesino* union-movement and both the nationalist state in general and, in particular, the military-*campesino* pact, which had introduced a military tutelage over the *campesino* organisation. A second current was that of party-politics, not only with the formation of the *Partido Indio* ('Indian Party') in the late 1970s, but also with the *Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari* ('Tupac Katari Indian Movement', MITKA) and the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari* ('Tupac Katari Revolutionary Movement', MRTK), which unsuccessfully competed in elections up to the late 1980s. The third current, alongside the political and trade-union ones, was an academic current concerned with historiographical and sociological investigation. All nationalism has been said to ultimately be a form of historical revisionism, and thus it is not surprising that a generation of Aymara emigrants entering the academic world in the 1970s and 1980s were devoted to rigorously advancing this historical revisionism by carrying out case-studies on uprisings, *caudillos* and indigenous demands from colonial times to the present.

Though there were several currents during this period, the strength of the Katarist-Indianist movement was concentrated in the CSUTCB. But, like all subaltern identities, this mobilising force included multiple, intertwined strategic levels of challenging the state. Thus, though it is possible to identify a strong ethnicist rhetoric in the leaders' discourses and in the symbols with which they identified – pictures of the indigenous leaders and the *wiphala* – the CSUTCB's

actual discursive mobilising strength was basically focused on economic and class-based demands, such as those that led to the first major roadblock of the new union-administration led by Genaro Flores, in December 1979. CSUTCB protests of a predominantly political and ethno-national nature, rather than focusing strictly on *campesino* demands, did not occur until the uprisings of 2000, 2001 and 2003.

A second moment in this period of discursive development and of élite Aymara identity-formation occurred in the early 1980s, with a slow but increasing decentralisation of this discourse. Katarist-Indianist ideologues and activists became fragmented, producing three main currents. The culturalist current, confined to the sphere of music and religion, is now referred to as the '*pachamámicos*'.¹¹ This discourse has essentially lost its initial political content, and has a strong element of folklorising Indianness.

A second current, less urban than the previous one, has been termed a current upholding 'integrationist' political discourses, since it advocated indigenous people asserting themselves as a pressure-group able to secure a degree of recognition within the current state-order. It was a discursive development of the indigenous as a subject with claims, demanding recognition from the state in order to participate in the existing statehood and citizenship, but without losing their own cultural particularities. The Katarist wing of the movement appealing to Indianness lent substance to this position; the indigenous person embodies the lack of equality before the state due to their cultural belonging (Aymara and Quechua), which is thus rendered a signifier of a lack of rights (equality), a future (full citizenship) and a distinct identity (multiculturalism).

This discourse constructs its imaginary by condemning the existence of two types of citizenship: 'first-class' citizenship, monopolised by the *q'aras*; and 'second-class' citizenship, held by the indigenous. With this hierarchical ranking of the levels of citizenship in Bolivian society, this discourse engages in a struggle for the recognition of difference, but it does so in order to be able to erase this difference and achieve equality and homogeneity, at least in a political sense, with what is considered to be 'first-class citizenship'.

In this case, difference is not held up as a bearer of rights, which would necessitate conceiving a multicultural citizenship or a demand for collective political rights, different citizenships and plural politico-institutional structures, though with equal political prerogatives with respect to the state. Difference, in this case, is a stepping stone to equality, such that the political future that Katarism envisages for the indigenous remains that of the state-citizenship presented by the dominant élites for decades. To some extent, its distance from the modernising discourse of revolutionary nationalism does not lie in this

11. '*Pachamama*' means 'Mother-Earth' – editor's note.

inescapable destiny of citizenship and the institutional framework used to exercise it, but rather in the recognition of cultural plurality in order to be able to gain access to it, which was precisely the contribution of the modest liberal discourse regarding the issue of 'peoples' and 'ethnicities'. It is, therefore, not surprising that many of the Katarist figures who elaborated this discourse subsequently collaborated with the modernising and multiculturalist proposals of the old nationalist party, which once again formed the government in 1993.

At the same time, in the 1980s, this ideological current, more tied to *campesino* unionism, was the closest to the Marxist currents and to the still-predominant labour-movement organised around the *Central Obrera Boliviana* ('Bolivian Workers' Central', COB). For example, Genaro Flores was able to make alliances with the leftist *Unidad Democrática Popular* ('Popular Democratic Unity', UDP) coalition in the 1980 elections, and some of its members joined Siles Zuazo's government. In the years to follow, leaders of this Katarist faction sought to modify the organic composition of COB's social representation from within, leading to one of the most important indigenous challenges to the working-class Left.

A third discursive variant of this Katarist Indianism was the strictly national-indigenous current, at first intuitively advocated by Indianist militants, activists and theorists influenced by Fausto Reinaga,¹² who sought to constitute an Indian Republic. It was a discourse that did not ask the state for the right to citizenship, but emphasised that it had to be the indigenous people themselves who should rule the state, since they wanted to. A state that, precisely because of this Indian presence, would have to become a different state and a different republic, as the contemporary republican state had been a power-structure founded on the exclusion and the extermination of the indigenous.

Seen this way, the indigenous person becomes not only a political subject, but also a subject with power, with command, with sovereignty. The historical narrative of the indigenous constructed in this discourse goes beyond the culturalist one condemning exclusion, deprivations and suffering. It is a heroic narrative, somewhat bellicose, marked by uprisings, resistance, efforts contributed, and glories periodically brought about by various means, which will one day be definitively restored by means of the 'Indian revolution'.

In this case, the Indian is conceived as a project of political and social power that can replace the republican régime of élite *q'aras*, who are considered unnecessary in the model of society espoused by this discourse. In its initial phase, this discourse took a pan-indigenous form, in that it referred to a single Indian identity that extended throughout the continent, with small regional variations. This transnational approach to the indigenous civilisational structure can be

12. Reinaga 1969; 1978.

considered to expand its imaginary, in that it overcomes the classic localism of indigenous demands. At the same time, however, it has a weakness in that it minimises the very intra-indigenous differences and the different strategies for integration, dissolution and resistance that each indigenous nationality has adopted under the different republican régimes over the last century.

Hence, in a second phase, a current within this Indianist school led by Felipe Quispe and the *Ayllus Rojos* ('Red Ayllus')¹³ made two new contributions to Reinaga's legacy. First, it secured the recognition of a popular Bolivian identity, the result of centuries of broken cultural and occupational *mestizaje* in the various urban and rural regions. This is important, because through the initial Indianist lens, the 'Bolivian' had been merely an invention of a very exclusive foreign élite whose goal was to return to its European countries of origin. With this new perspective, however, the forms of popular Bolivian identity, such as the worker, and, to some extent, the *campesino* in certain regions, emerged as collective subjects with which to develop political alliances, pacts of mutual recognition, and so on. This was the political significance of the theory of the 'two Bolivias'.

The second contribution made by this discourse is that of the specificity of the Aymara indigenous identity. Though there is an effort to inscribe multiple urban and rural sectors in the indigenous, there is a more precise and effective interpretation of this identity-construction with respect to the Aymara world, not only based on the politicisation of the language and the territory, but also on its organisational forms and their different shape as compared to other indigenous peoples. Thus, the Aymara Indian clearly emerges as a collective identity and as a political subject headed toward a future of self-government and self-determination. It is, certainly, a peculiar combination of interpretations of the historical tradition of indigenous struggles for autonomy together with modern interpretations of the self-determination of nations, developed by critical Marxism. The importance of this combination lies in that it makes it possible to locate the discourse in specific territorial settings, in actual demographic populations and in more coherent and effective institutional systems of power and mobilisation than those of *pan-Indianness*. Hence we can say that, as a result of this discursive formation, the Indian and *Indianismo* have become a strictly national discourse – the discourse of the Aymara indigenous nation.

These two contributions of Indianism as a strategy for power displaced the hostility that this ideological current had displayed toward certain Marxist tendencies, leading to a dialogue, admittedly tense, between the Indianist current and emerging critical-Marxist intellectual currents, which has helped to define

13. Quispe 1989.

more precisely the Indianist strategy for the struggle for and construction of political power.

Incorporation into the state

The second period in the construction of the national-indigenous discourse was that of its incorporation into the state. This began in the late 1980s, when intellectuals and activists in the indigenous movement were experiencing great political frustration, as their attempts to convert the strength of the unionised indigenous masses into votes did not yield the desired results. This led to a rapid fragmentation of apparently irreconcilable currents within the Katarist-Indianist movement, without any of them being able to hegemonically articulate the others. The integration and competition within the liberal-republican structures of power (the party-system, the delegation of political will, and so on) imposed structural limits on Katarist Indianism's approach in favour of negotiation and integration. It was also a time when, along with a greater receptivity for this discourse in society, the parties of the Left and Bolivian intellectuals embarked upon their first attempts to redesign these proposals. They did so not with any eagerness to understand them, but rather only to use them instrumentally to seek electoral support and foreign funding.

At the same time that society and the parties of the Marxist Left were witnessing the brutal decay of the identity and the strength of the unionised working masses, the adoption and redevelopment of an ethnicist discourse offered a possible alternative in terms of what subjects could be brought together. Thus, the conceptual structure with which this declining Left approached indigenous discursive construction did not capture the entirety of the logical structure of this proposal, which would have required dismantling the colonial and vanguardist framework that characterised the Left of this period.

Interestingly, this was also a time of internal conflict in the CSUTCB, between the Katarist and Indianist ethnic-*campesino* discourse and the sparingly ethnicised leftist discourse. Genaro Flores's defeat in the 1988 convention ended a period of Indianist Katarist discursive hegemony in the CSUTCB, leading to a long decade in which depoliticised and culturalist versions of indigenous identity prevailed, often produced directly by the state or by non-governmental organisations. Along with this union-retreat and electoral frustration, some Indianist activist-groups adopted more radical organisational positions, creating the *Ejército Guerrillero Tupac Katari* ('Tupac Katari Guerrilla-Army', EGTK) based on a theoretical proposal of Aymara indigenous self-government and support from militarised structures in the *altiplano* communities, fifteen years later bearing influence on the organisational and discursive structures of the twenty-first century indigenous rebellions in the northern *altiplano*.

The MNR was the political party that most clearly understood the importance of the discursive development of an indigenous nationalism, seen as a danger, and the difficulties being experienced by the indigenous movement. With the alliance between Victor Hugo Cárdenas and a series of intellectuals and activists in the indigenous movement, the MNR converted rhetorical recognition of the country's multiculturalism into state-policy, while the Law of Popular Participation enabled mechanisms of local social mobility with the capacity to absorb the discourse and the action of a large part of the increasingly dissatisfied indigenous intelligentsia.

While the implementation of the Law of Popular Participation has contributed, in some cases, to a notable strengthening of local union-organisations, which have managed to present themselves electorally at the national level, it can also be seen as a quite sophisticated mechanism for co-opting leaders and local activists, beginning to advance their struggles and their organisational forms around the town-councils and indigenist bodies specifically created by the state. This created a space of ethnic fragmentation as it also fostered the revival and the invention of local indigenous ethnicities, of *ayllus* and indigenous associations separate from each other but linked vertically to an economy of demands on and concessions from the state. Thus, the autonomous indigenous identity based on the organisational structure of the 'unions', created in the 1970s, was confronted with a kaleidoscopic fragmentation of *ayllu*, municipal and 'ethnic' identities.

This was a period of reaccommodating the forces and currents internal to the indigenous movement, of a rapid taming of the discourses of identity to meet the parameters established by the liberal state, and of social disorganisation and low levels of mobilisation of the indigenous masses. Unlike the great march of 1996 against the INRA law (*Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria*; 'National Institute for Land-Reform'), the leading role in social struggles passed from the Aymara *altiplano* to the coca-farming regions of the Chapare, where a *campesino* type of discourse prevailed, complemented by indigenous cultural components.

Indianism in the 1990s

The third stage of this new Indianist period can be considered a strategy for power, developing in the late 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century. This was when Indianism ceased to be an ideology of resistance to domination and it started to spread as a proto-hegemonic worldview, attempting to mount a challenge for the cultural and political leadership of society as against the neo-liberal ideology that had been predominant during the previous 18 years. Indeed, we can now affirm that the most important and influential emancipatory worldview in the country's current political context is Indianism, and that it is the discursive and organisational core of what we can call the 'new Left'.

Regardless of whether the actors in this reconstruction of the contemporary political spectrum identify with the 'Left' label,¹⁴ in terms of sociological classification,¹⁵ the indigenous social movements, first and foremost, and also the political parties created by them, have created an 'antagonistic relationship between opposing parties' in the political universe, which can be accurately represented as a spatial dichotomy, as with the case of 'Lefts and Rights'. This does not imply, like it did before, that it is an identity, as these movements and parties now self-identify more as indigenous (Aymara and Quechua), as originary (ancestral nations) or with respect to their labour (the 'ordinary working people' referred to by the Cochabamba Water-Coalition).

The material basis for this historical situation of Indianism is the capacity for community-rebellion with which the indigenous communities respond to the increasing deterioration and decline of the *campesino* community-structures and the mechanisms of social mobility between the countryside and the city. Already apparent in the 1970s, the economy's neoliberal reforms dramatically affected the price-system for urban-rural economic exchange. With the stagnation of traditional agrarian productivity and the opening to unrestricted imports, the terms of exchange, which are normally unfavourable for the *campesino* economy, were drastically worsened,¹⁶ reducing the *campesino* families' purchasing power, savings and consumption. Added to this was an increased contraction of the urban labour-market, along with a reduction in the income obtained from the few urban occupational activities with which *campesino* families routinely complemented their earnings. This limited the combination of urban and rural labour with which *campesino* families develop strategies for collective reproduction.

With the mechanisms of internal and external social mobility blocked to communities, and with increasing migration to the cities in recent years, but with a growth in dual-residency migration in those populations from rural areas with relatively sustainable productive conditions (which ultimately became the regions of greatest *campesino*-indigenous mobilisation), the uprisings and the growing spread of Indianist ideology began when the liberalising economic reforms started to affect the basic conditions of reproduction in the agrarian and semi-urban community-structures (water and land). Unlike what Bourdieu described in the case of Algeria,¹⁷ where the breakdown of traditional society gave way to a disorganised subproletariat, trapped in clientelist networks and lacking political autonomy, the increasing deterioration of the traditional economic structure

14. Radical Indianism never accepted being characterised as 'Left', since the traditional Left reproduced the anti-indigenous and colonialist criteria of the political Right.

15. Bobbio 1996.

16. Pérez 2004.

17. Bourdieu 1977.

of rural and urban society has produced a strengthening of community-ties as a mechanism for achieving basic security and collective reproduction.

It is in the midst of this, and of the ideological hollowing out caused by this lack of prospects of modernisation, that the Indianist ideology has been able to spread, offering a framework for the collective drama based precisely on the political articulation of the everyday experience of social exclusion, ethnic discrimination and communal social memory of Indian *campesinos* abandoned by a business-oriented state dedicated exclusively to strengthening the tiny enclaves of transnationalised modernity in the economy. Indianism politicised culture, language, history and skin-colour – precisely the elements used by urban ‘modernity’ to hinder and legitimate the contraction of the mechanisms of inclusion and social mobility. This politicisation is the tangible element of a communitarian ideology of emancipation that quickly eroded the neoliberal ideology, already causing frustrations due to the excessive promises it had made at the time of its establishment. At the same time, this Indianism united a mobilisable, insurrectional and electoral mass, effectively politicising the discursive political field and consolidating itself as an ideology with ambitions of state-power.

This Indianism, as a strategy for power, currently has two variants: a moderate one (the *Movimiento al Socialismo*, ‘Movement for Socialism’, MAS; and the *Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos*, ‘Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of Peoples’, IPSP) and a radical one (the *Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti*, ‘Pachakuti Indigenous Movement’, MIP; and the CSUTCB). The moderate variant is articulated around the *campesino* unions in Chapare, opposed to policies aimed at eradicating coca. Based on a *campesino* discourse that has only gained more ethnic connotations over the last few years, the coca-growers’ unions have established a range of flexible and plural alliances as an electoral ‘political instrument’ that has allowed the unions, especially the agrarian ones, to hold positions in local government and to have a significant parliamentary presence. Vindicating a project for including indigenous peoples in the structures of power, and with a greater emphasis on an anti-imperialist standpoint, this could be called a Left-Indianist tendency, given its capacity to embrace the Marxist and leftist national-popular memory created in previous decades, thus affording it greater urban, multisectoral and cross-regional reception, making it the principal political and parliamentary force of the Left, and the principal municipal electoral force in the country.

The radical-Indianist variant is more aimed at a total Indianisation of the structures of political power, such that, according to its leader, those that should negotiate their forms of inclusion in the state are the ‘*mestizos*’, as minorities with political and cultural equality with the indigenous majority. Though *campesino* issues are always present in the discursive repertoire of this

Indianism, all the elements aimed at claiming rights are ordered and led by ethnic identity (Aymara and Quechua 'original nations'). It is, therefore, a political proposal that is directly connected to the hard core of Indianist thought developed in its formative period (Reinaga), and thus it, too, is an object of the critique of the old Marxist Left and its culture, which still exercises a passive influence in urban *mestizo* social sectors. As a result, this current has only been consolidated in the strictly Aymara urban and rural world, and can be considered a kind of national Aymara Indianism.

Despite their notable differences and conflicts, both currents share similar political trajectories:

- a) Their organisational social base is in the unions and the indigenous agrarian communities.
- b) The parliamentary 'parties' or 'political instruments' come from negotiated coalitions of *campesino* unions and, in the case of MAS, of popular urban ones, which have joined together to gain parliamentary representation, such that the 'union-masses-party' triad, so characteristic of the old Left, has been abandoned in favour of an understanding of the 'party' as the parliamentary extension of the union.
- c) Their leadership, and a large part of their intellectuals and senior personnel (to a greater extent in the MIP) are indigenous Aymara or Quechua and direct producers, such that their involvement in politics simultaneously takes the form of a self-representation of class and ethnicity.
- d) Ethnic identity – integrationist in some cases, self-determining in others – is the discursive basis for the political project with which they confront the state and make appeals to the rest of society, including the salaried working class.
- e) Though democracy is the context in which they present their claims, there is a proposal for extending democracy and making it more complex, based on the exercise of non-liberal organisational logics and the postulation of a project for power that revolves around a form of co-government of nations and peoples.

What remains to be seen in this diverse unfolding of Indianist thought is whether it will be a worldview dominant in the state, or if – as its organisational weaknesses, political errors and the internal fragmentation of its supporting communities seem to suggest – it will be an ideology of political actors who will only regulate the excesses of a state-sovereignty exercised by the same political subjects and social classes that have always been in power.

Finally, with respect to the new relation between these Indianisms and Marxism, unlike what occurred in previous decades, when the existence of a vigorous labour-movement was accompanied by a basic but widespread Marxist culture, today the vigorous indigenous social and political movement does not have a broad Marxist intellectual and cultural production to accompany it. Old state-Marxism is not politically or intellectually relevant, and the new critical Marxism, which comes from a new intellectual generation, has limited influence and still-narrow circles of production.

Still, it remains significant that this cultural and political Indianist movement is not accompanied by a vigorous indigenous and Indianist-educated intelligentsia. While present-day Indianism has a growing practically-active intelligentsia in the leadership of unions, communities and agrarian and neighbourhood-federations, the movement lacks its own educated intelligentsia and more strategic visions. The indigenous social group that could have fulfilled this role is still lethargic following the impact of the neoliberal state's widespread inclusion of indigenous cadres in the 1990s. And, interestingly, it is some of these small groups of critical Marxists that have been accompanying, chronicling and disseminating this new period of Indianist horizons with the most reflexive insight, thus creating the possibility of a space for communication and mutual enrichment between Indianisms and Marxisms – likely to be the most important emancipatory conceptions of society in Bolivia in the twenty-first century.

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Index

- 1844 Manuscripts* 56 n. 86
 1848 Revolutions 40–42, 81, 122
 1952 Revolution 95, 112, 114, 128, 161–162, 183, 220, 226, 246, 280 n. 24, 290, 306
 2002 Bolivian general election 9, 275, 278
 2005 Bolivian general election 9–10
- Acción Democrática Nacionalista* (ADN) 280, 298
 actually-existing socialism 19, 191 n. 65
 agribusiness 64, 228–229, 287
 Aguirre Beltrán, Gonzalo 189 n. 58
 Aguirre Gainsborg, José 306
 alienation 28, 31, 33–34, 57, 62, 86, 102, 146, 158
 Althusser, Louis 3
 Antequera 108, 119
 anthropology 6
apartheid 161, 178 n. 34, 290
 Apaza, Julián 152
apt'api 254
 Arato, Jean 237
 Argentina 147, 216
 Aricó, José María 4
 Arrighi, Giovanni 24 n. 14
 Arze, José Antonio 306
asociaciones de regantes 233, 239
ayllus 92, 102, 174, 195, 203–204, 208, 235, 243–245, 270, 272, 315, 317
Ayllus Rojos 315
 Aymara 270, 274–275, 290–291, 295, 297, 306, 311–313, 315–318, 320
 Ayopaya 151
- Bakunin, Mikhail 73 n. 113
 Banzer, Hugo 2, 278, 280 n. 25
 Baudrillard, Jean 67 n. 106
 Bechtel 7
 Beni 280, 298
 Bobbio, Norberto 80 n. 134, 127 n. 18, 181 n. 39, 202 n. 85, 318 n. 15
- Bolívar, Simón 4, 91, 160, 243, 246
 Bonefeld, Werner 21 n. 9
 Bonfil, Guillermo 177 n. 33, 180 n. 37
 Bourdieu, Pierre 2, 8, 31, 59, 253, 266, 318
 Braudel, Fernand 268
 Brazil 147, 270
 Brenner, Robert 121 n. 3
 Bretton Woods 24 n. 14
- cabildo* 195, 234–235, 241, 253–255, 293
caciques 155
 Cajcha 108
cajchas 216
 Caracollos 134, 137
 Calamarca 118, 135, 138, 140–141
 Calderón, Fernando 214 n. 16
Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente (CAO) 298
Cámara de Industria, Comercio, Servicios y Turismo de Santa Cruz (CAINCO) 298
Capital 3, 6, 21, 24 n. 15, 27, 30–31, 33 n. 33, 41, 49, 58–60, 79, 121
 Cárdenas, Victor Hugo 2 n. 4, 7 n. 19, 317
 caste citizenship 246
caudillismo/caudillo state 161, 290
Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) 3, 45 n. 54, 98, 114, 213, 223, 268, 314
 Chaco War 89, 114, 216, 306
 Chapare 151, 158, 204, 270, 272, 293, 317, 319
 Chiapas 154, 158, 189
 Chile 216
 China 4, 21 n. 7, 24 n. 15, 54
 Chomsky, Noam 67 n. 107
 Christianity 312
 citizenship 19, 43, 89–103, 118, 121, 123, 125, 131, 136, 145–146, 150, 153, 160–162, 164, 178 n. 34, 179 n. 34, 184, 187, 190–192, 194–195, 201–202, 204–205, 207–208, 220–221, 224, 226, 231, 246, 248, 250, 258, 268, 272, 289–290, 310–311, 313–314
 civic committees 130, 271, 279, 288, 297

- civil society 43, 67, 80, 90–91, 95, 98,
100–101, 221, 237, 266, 268
CLACSO 1 n. 1
class-struggle 6 n. 16, 47, 51, 55, 76,
83, 301
clientelism 271
cocaleros 9
Cochabamba 2, 7, 12, 119, 132, 139, 142,
236–237, 242–243, 253, 272, 280, 293,
295, 297–298, 318
Cohen, Andrew 237
collas 138
colonialism 2 n. 4, 49–50, 145–146, 184,
245, 255, 294
Colquiri 114, 119, 137, 217
communal class 50–51
communality 22
communism 12–13, 20–22, 28 n. 22, 51 n.
72, 73, 75–76, 84
Communist League 77 n. 124
Communist Manifesto 17, 24, 37, 45, 47,
56 n. 86, 85
Communist Party (PCB) 3, 307
communitarianism 13, 199 n. 80, 276,
302
community-assemblies 253
Confederación de Colonizadores 292
Confederación General de Trabajadores
Fabriles de Bolivia (CGTFB) 220
Confederación Sindical Única de
Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia
(CSUTCB) 2, 292, 312
Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas de
Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) 292
consociation 201
constituent assembly 238, 277–278, 280,
287–288, 293, 297, 300–302
cooperatives 64, 74
Coordinadora de Pueblos Étnicos de Santa
Cruz (CPESC) 292
Coordinadora por la Defensa del Agua
y de la Vida [all pages with the word
Coordinadora refer to this] 132, 142,
234, 237–239, 241–243, 261, 292
Coriat, Benjamin 38 n. 44, 110 n. 9
Corporación Boliviana de Fomento 120
Corporación Minera de Bolivia
(COMIBOL) 116, 120
corporatism 271
Cuba 147
Danielson, Nikolai 25 n. 16
demos 179 n. 34, 190–191
derivation school 265
developmentalism 11
Díaz Polanco, Héctor 196 n. 73
division of labour 28, 36, 39, 44, 47 n.
56, 54, 67, 92, 113, 115–116, 159–160, 164,
168, 307
Do Alto, Hervé 1 n. 1
Dunkerley, James 13
Durkheim, Émile 266
Eagleton, Terry 170 n. 22, 260 n. 73
Eastern Europe 19, 85
Echeverría, Bolívar 71 n. 110
Economic Commission for Latin America
and the Caribbean (ECLAC) 124
Ecuador 1 n. 2
Ejército de Liberación Nacional
(ELN) 307
Ejército Guerrillero Tupac Katari
(EGTK; see also Katarism) 3 nn. 4, 6,
5, 138, 152–153, 313, 316
El Alto 6, 12, 138–139, 238, 243, 272, 276
Elias, Norberto 177, 179 n. 34, 245 n. 52,
266, 273
encomenderos 97, 251
Engels, Friedrich 4, 6, 20 n. 7, 24 n. 15,
25 n. 16, 47, 49, 51 n. 72, 53 n. 72, 58 n.
92, 76, 78 n. 128, 81, 85 n. 145
England 40–42, 122, 195 n. 71
ethnic/ethnicity 2 n. 3, 3–6, 146, 152, 157,
161–162, 164–169, 171, 173 n. 29, 174–176,
182, 184, 186–192, 195–196, 200–202,
205–207, 246, 259 n. 72, 260 nn. 75–76,
272, 274–275, 280, 290–292, 294–295,
302–303, 305, 308, 310–311, 316–317,
319–320
ethnocentrism 191
ethnos 191
fascism 17
Federación Sindical de Trabajadores
Mineros de Bolivia (FSTMB) 114, 220
feudal/feudalism 30, 47 n. 56, 78 n. 128,
84 n. 144
First Gas-War (October 2003) 4
First International/International
Workingmen's Association
(IWMA) 82 n. 139, 84 n. 144
Flores, Genaro 313–314, 316
Fordism 37, 46
formal subsumption 40, 63, 108, 230, 250
Foucault, Michel 59, 136
Fraser, Nancy 251

- French Revolution 42
 Fukuyama, Francis 65
- gamonalismo* 151
 Gamson, William 214
 García Línara, Álvaro 1–6, 7 n. 20, 8–11
 García Línara, Raúl 5, 7 n. 20
 Germany 41–42, 77, 81 n. 137, 169
 Giddens, Anthony 238 n. 39
 globalisation 19–27, 43, 181 n. 38, 268, 286, 296
 Gramsci, Antonio 3, 10, 266
 ‘Great Society’ 48
 Grebe, Horst 180 n. 36, 285
 Guarani 1 n. 2
 Guatemala 154
 Guattari, Félix 32 n. 32
 Guevarist 3, 5
 Gutiérrez, Raquel 5, 7 n. 20
 Guzmán, Abimael (‘Presidente Gonzalo’) 5
- Habermas, Jürgen 190 n. 63, 234, 255
haciendas 109, 146
 Hardt, Michael 258 n. 70
 Hartzell, Caroline 193
 Harvey, David 23 n. 14, 24 n. 14
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 3, 91, 156, 287
 Hobbes, Thomas 101
 Hobsbawm, Eric 20 n. 6
 Holloway, John 21 n. 9
 Huanchaca 108
 Huanuni 119, 137, 217
 hydrocarbons 9, 11, 274, 277, 279, 284, 288, 293, 300–301
- import-substitution 19, 123, 228–229
 Indianisation 160, 269 n. 13, 319
 Indianism 3, 5, 164, 305, 309, 311–312, 314–315, 317–321
 indigenous languages 162–163, 194, 201, 207
 indigenous peoples 1–2, 4, 162, 166, 177 n. 33, 180 n. 37, 189, 195, 249, 270, 292, 311, 315, 319
 indigenous self-government 195, 200, 205, 207, 271, 287–288, 316
 individuality 51 n. 72, 97, 103, 179 n. 34, 180–181, 185, 203, 221, 237
 institutionality 134, 170, 172, 183, 206, 224, 242, 250, 252, 255, 260, 271–273, 276–277, 287, 289, 294
- Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (INRA) 247, 317
Instrumento Político per la Soberanía de los Pueblos (IPSP) 319
 International Labour Organisation (ILO) 65 n. 104, 195 n. 72
- Kant, Immanuel 3, 265
 Katarism 3 nn. 4, 6. 313
 kinship 44, 141, 171, 173 n. 29, 182, 184–185, 202, 260 n. 76, 261
 Kondratieff, Nikolai 121
 Kymlicka, Will 188–189, 191 n. 65
- La Paz 2, 6, 8, 119, 125, 134, 137–139, 154, 198, 227, 253–254, 272, 276, 280, 295, 297
 labour-organisation 38 n. 44, 39, 43, 107, 116, 216–217, 239
 Laserna, Roberto 181 n. 38
 Lassalle, Ferdinand 78 n. 128
 Laymes 195
 Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich 3, 5–6, 25 n. 16
 Lero, Juan 305
 liberalism 17, 79–80, 101, 103, 275–276
 Locke, John 80 n. 134
 Lora, Guillermo 306
 Luxemburg, Rosa 187 n. 47
- mallku* 258
Manifiesto de la Sociedad Geográfica 297
 March for Life 4, 117–118, 125, 130, 132, 142
 Mariátegui, José Carlos 3, 150
 Marof, Tristán 306
 Marx, Karl 3–6, 19–22, 24, 25 n. 16, 27 n. 21, 28 n. 22, 30, 32–34, 36 nn. 37, 40. 37, 38 n. 42, 39–40, 47, 49–50, 51 n. 72, 53, 55, 56 n. 86, 57–58, 59 n. 95, 64 n. 103, 65, 71–73, 75–83, 84 nn. 143–144, 172, 237 n. 37, 238 n. 43, 265, 277, 309 n. 8
 Marxism 3–5, 8 n. 22, 17, 52, 78, 83, 148, 305–309, 312, 315, 321
 Mesa, Carlos 9, 299
 mestization/*mestizaje* 93, 172, 290, 311, 315
mestizo 1 n. 2, 2, 5, 93–94, 151, 161 n. 7, 162, 168, 172, 173 n. 29, 174, 176, 191, 194, 199, 201, 204, 270, 275, 290, 310–312, 320
 Mexico 3, 9, 147, 189, 196 n. 73
 microenterprise 11, 230, 279
 migration/migrants 19, 148, 174, 220, 244, 310, 318

- miners/mining 3 n. 6, 4–5, 7, 23 n. 13, 64–65, 92–93, 107–109, 111–116, 118–121, 125, 127, 129–131, 134–135, 137–142, 180, 197, 212, 215–220, 222, 227–230, 269, 287, 295, 297, 307–308
- Mojeños 199 n. 80
- monoculturalism 175, 201
- Montesquieu 101
- Morales, Evo 1, 3 nn. 4, 6, 9–10, 277 n. 20, 280
- Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR) 2 n. 4, 3, 280, 298, 306
- Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario de Izquierda* 3
- Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) 9, 277, 319
- Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR) 3, 298
- Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti* (MIP) 319
- Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari* (MRTK) 312
- national bourgeoisie 1, 228
- nationality 145, 169, 175, 186, 192, 197, 315
- Negri, Antonio 8, 32 n. 32, 33 n. 33
- neoliberalism/neoliberalisation 3, 7, 67, 148, 211, 288, 301
- nonwaged labour 56
- Oberschall, Anthony 214–215
- October Agenda 300
- October Revolution (1917) 24, 122, 123
- Ofensiva Roja de los Ayllus Tupakataristas* 5
- Offe, Claus 243
- Omasuyos 11, 151, 243
- Oommen, T.K. 165
- Oruro 119, 125, 130, 134, 280, 295, 297
- Ovando Sáenz, Jorge 150
- Pachamama* 313 n. 11
- Pacheco, Diego 194 n. 69
- Pacheco, Pablo 244 n. 51
- paliris* 113
- Partido de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (PIR) 306
- Partido Indio* 312
- Partido Obrero Revolucionario* (POR) 3, 306
- Partido Socialista 1* (PS1) 307
- Patzi, Félix 199 n. 80
- Paz Estenssoro, Victor 4, 120, 123, 129, 247, 306
- peasant-unions 2 n. 4, 9–10, 194
- Peru 150
- piecework 56, 230
- pijcheos* 111, 219
- PNUD 284 n. 4, 285 n. 11
- Popular Participation (PP) 193, 249–250, 298, 317
- Portugalete 108
- post-Fordism 46
- Potosí 119, 130, 139, 154, 174, 196, 204, 270, 272, 280, 295, 297–298
- Poupeau, Franck 214–215
- Prada, Raúl 7 n. 20
- Programas de Desarrollo Educativo Municipal* (PDEM) 249
- Programas Operativos Anuales* (POA) 249
- proletarianisation 42, 46–47, 56, 61, 63–65, 113, 213
- q'aras* 6 n. 16, 250, 252, 257
- Qakachacas 195
- Quechua 1, 2 n. 4, 5, 108 n. 3, 152, 153 n. 6, 154, 162, 172, 174–176, 178, 192–193, 196, 199 n. 80, 200–201, 253, 259, 290–291, 313, 318, 320
- quépiris* 151
- Quiroga, Jorge 'Tuto' 10, 278
- Quispe, Felipe 5, 6 n. 16, 8, 10, 252–254, 269 n. 13, 315
- Qullasuyu 6 n. 16, 151, 292, 297
- Rancière, Jacques 203 n. 86, 258 n. 69
- real subsumption 24–25, 30, 40, 49, 63, 108, 118, 150, 184–185, 217, 221, 230, 250, 272, 307–308
- Reinaga, Fausto 2 n. 4, 311, 314–315, 320
- Roosevelt, Theodore 187
- Rorty, Richard 191 n. 65
- Rothchild, Donald 193
- Russia 24 n. 15, 42, 76, 122, 187
- Sánchez de Lozada, Gonzalo ("Goni") 2 n. 4, 7 n. 19, 9, 247, 278, 299
- Sartre, Jean-Paul 252
- Second Gas-War (June 2005) 12 n. 29
- second-class citizenship 164, 246, 313
- sects 17, 44, 58, 65, 68, 76, 83
- self-employment 109, 148
- self-management 12, 24, 59, 238, 276

- Sendero Luminoso* 5
 SIDA 1 n. 1
 Sin Tierra 292
 skin-colour 160, 164, 166–168, 175, 246, 310, 319
 social movements 7 n. 20, 8–9, 151, 189, 214–215, 237, 240–241, 243, 256, 269–270, 272–273, 277 n. 20, 279–281, 288–289, 292–294, 298–299, 318
 Soviet Union (USSR) 149
 Spain 24 n. 15, 42, 195 n. 71, 197 n. 75
 Spanish linguistic policy 162–164, 174–176
 Stalin, Joseph 33 n. 34
 state-capitalism 4, 19, 103, 124, 130, 149–150
 state-nationalism 19, 146, 148
 state-socialism 17, 148, 151
 Stefanoni, Pablo 1 n. 1, 6 n. 16
 subalternity 7 n. 20, 45, 50, 94, 100, 122, 124, 127, 130, 132, 134, 136, 139, 142, 148, 152, 155–156, 163–164, 166, 185, 212–213, 223, 227–228, 232 n. 31, 233, 238 n. 43, 240, 242, 246, 269, 274, 276, 293, 296, 299, 306, 312
 Sucre 154, 174, 196, 270, 295, 297–298
 Svampa, Maristella 6 n. 16
 symbolic violence 90, 226, 266

 Tapia, Luis 7 n. 20, 180 n. 37, 181 n. 38, 204, 227 n. 21
 Tarija 243, 280, 295, 298
 Tarrow, Sidney 215, 252
 Taylor, Charles 188
 Taylorism 37
 technological development 28, 30
 Therborn, Goran 74 n. 115
 Tilly, Charles 8, 190 n. 63, 215, 236

 Touraine, Alain 8, 19 n. 2, 214
 trade-unionism 216, 222, 232, 247, 268, 270
 Trotskyist 139, 308
 Turkey 24 n. 15, 165

Unidad Democrática Popular (UDP) 3, 314
 United Nations (UN) 195 n. 72
 Urquidi, Arturo 306

 Vega, Oscar 7 n. 20
 Villa Remedios 138

 wage-labour 47, 53 n. 73, 61, 67–68, 79
wajitas 111, 219
 Wallerstein, Immanuel 21 n. 9, 23 n. 13, 64 n. 103, 187
 War of the Pacific 9
 Washington Consensus 4, 280 n. 24
 Water-War (2000) 7, 278
 welfare-state 42–43, 45, 67
 Willcas 151
 Wilson, Woodrow 187
 World-War I 122
 World-War II 122

Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB) 11
 Yugoslavia 165

 Zapatistas 154, 158, 189, 202 n. 73
 Zárate Wilka, Pablo 305
 Zasulich, Vera 4, 49 n. 64
 Zavaleta, René 8, 46, 71 n. 110, 113, 150, 177, 183, 227, 232 n. 31, 272, 276, 294, 296, 309
 Zibechi, Raul 213 n. 6